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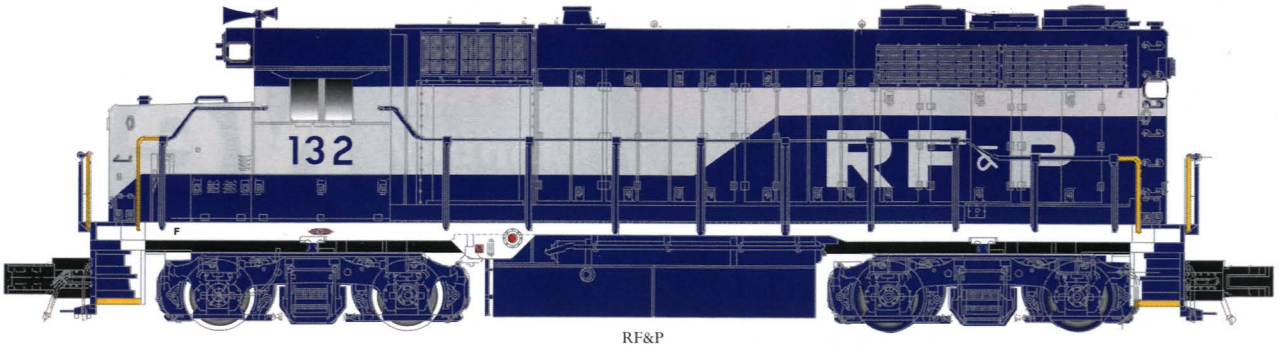

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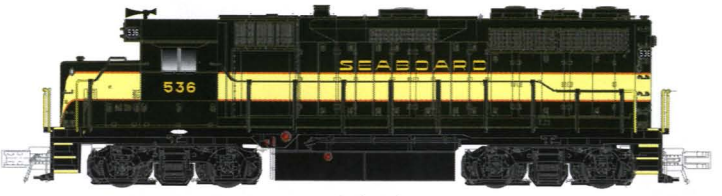

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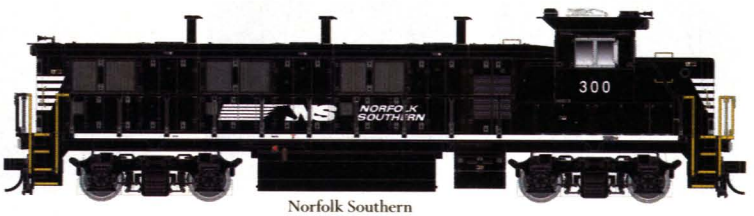

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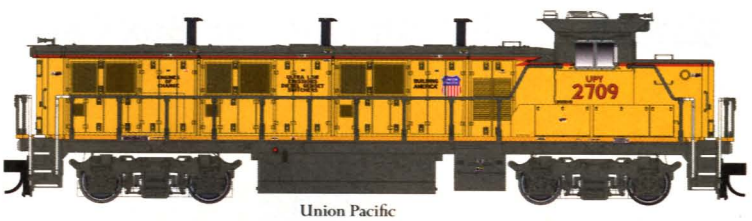

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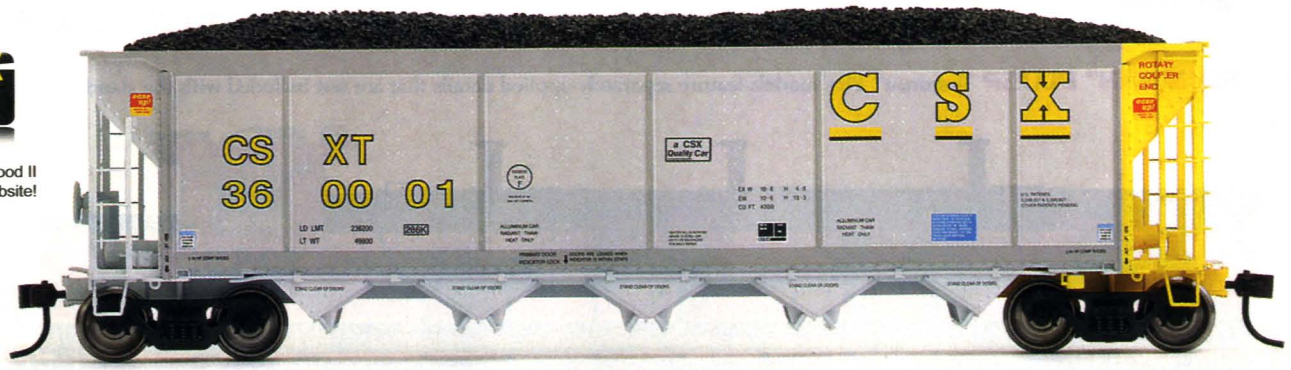

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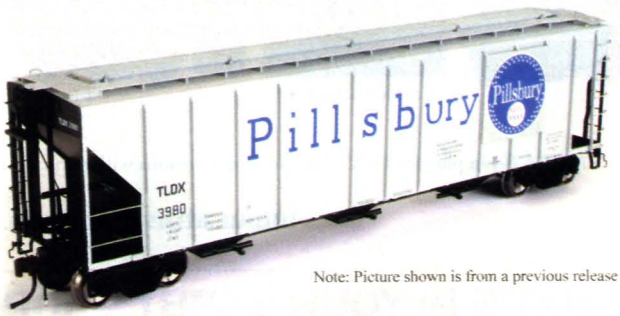

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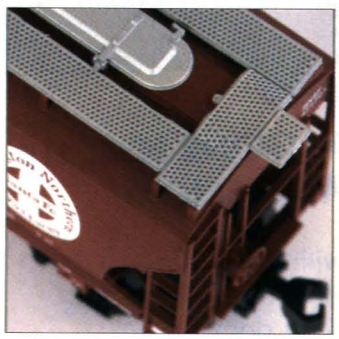

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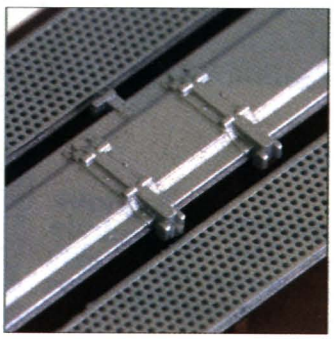

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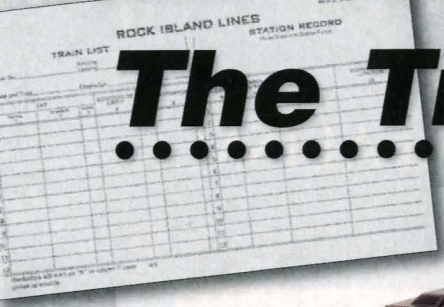

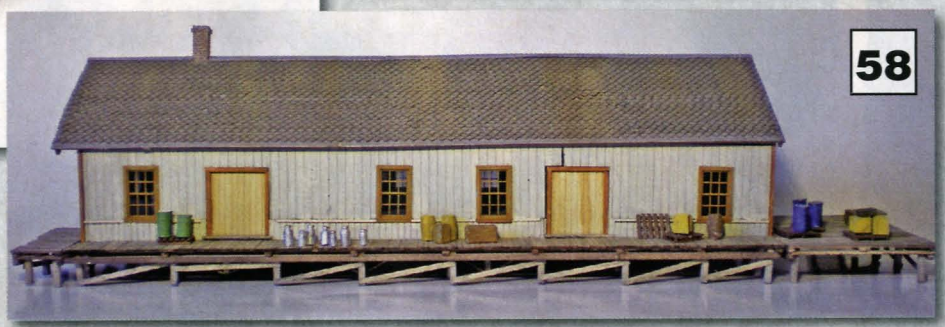

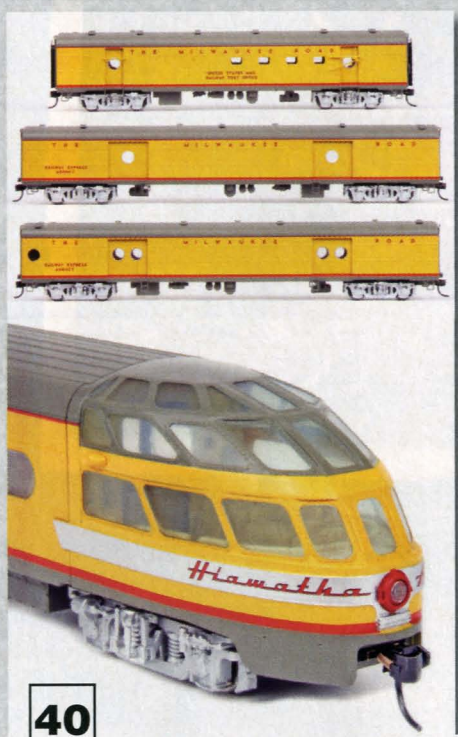

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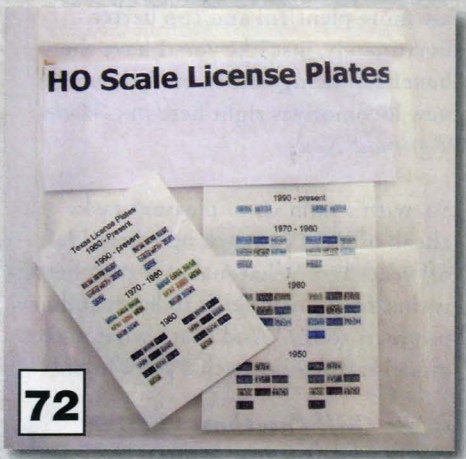

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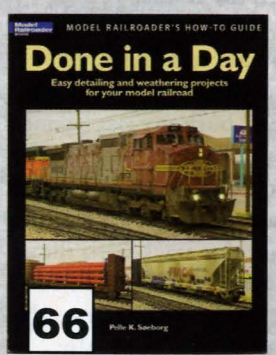
MODEL RAILROADER'S HOW-TO GUIDE
Done in a Day
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Pelle K. Soeborg

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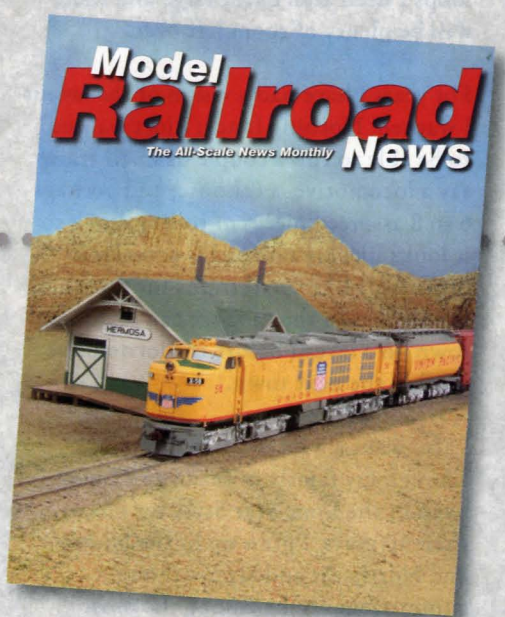


About The Cover: *Baby Turbine number 58 is about to reach the summit of Sherman Hill as it departs Hermosa, WY on its eastern journey to Cheyenne. The new Athearn HO-scale Ready-To-Roll Gas Turbines are a fitting tribute to these once powerful Union Pacific locomotives dubbed "Big Blow" by railfans. — Photo by David Otte*

Editorial Designing A Layout Of My Own

We've settled into our new house and it's all we hoped it would be. The house where Marge and I lived for over 20 years and raised 3.5 kids (we're still working on the last one) was comfortable, but the new one is spacious, even when our younger daughter comes home from college or when family comes to visit.

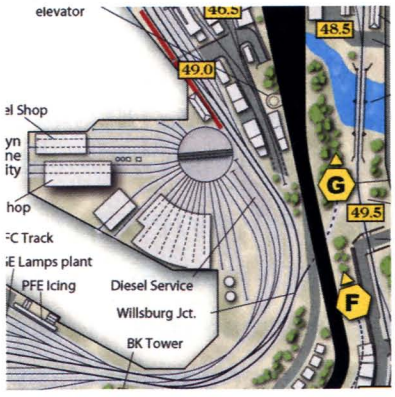
And I have a large room all to myself; I can have a home layout again.

The last time I had a home layout was about fifteen years ago when my train room was requisitioned to accommodate our growing family. The layout went to a friend; the HO stuff went into boxes. I was still able to enjoy model railroading by joining a modular club. I eventually switched to N scale and helped build an NTrak layout working with Loren Neufeld, Harry Daniel, and Rick Businger. The Grimy Gulch Scenic Railway filled several years with fun and I received an outstanding education in model railroading working with these guys. But I still wanted a layout where I could enjoy running my own trains.

My new room is also my office and photography studio, but I can arrange the furniture and fixtures in a way to give myself as much as a 20-foot by 6-foot space for a layout. I do need to have some work trackage to test locomotives and rolling stock, but as I usually do reviews of Z and N scale the loops I need aren't very large and there will be plenty of room left over.

For years I have had a vision of the layout I wanted. Nothing fancy; I just wanted to be able to run a couple of small trains, say a locomotive, a caboose, and perhaps 6 to 8 assorted pieces of rolling stock so it looks like my railroad is actually in business. I like small trains for the simple reason the caboose can leave one town on a layout before the locomotive reaches the next town.

I also want a winter-themed layout. Though my family is Texan and I have lived in the Lone Star State for more than 40 years, I grew up in the North and Northeast and always thought winter scenes to be among the most



beautiful in nature. In addition, one of the layouts that got me out of the armchair and into layout building was Ron Ford's "Pine Hollow Central" that appeared in the December 1989 issue of *Model Railroader*. Ron drew the inspiration for his charming holiday layout from "Cider Brook Farms Ice Company," a painting by Charles Wysocki. Though I don't plan to copy Ron's layout, I like the overall concept.

While my space is tailor-made for a point-to-point layout, I am going to have to have a loop so the grandkids can enjoy the trains. But I do want to have a track plan that allows a little operating so I want to incorporate John Allen's famous Timesaver. It doesn't require much space and it will give me a chance to really enjoy playing with the trains.

One of the first issues to be resolved before I begin tacking down track is the track itself. When I built my last layout, it wasn't really a problem; you put down cork or Homasote, nailed down the track and applied ballast. But since I have been using the Micro-Trains track with the attached base to test Z-scale trains, I have gotten a bit spoiled. Part of me, the old school part, says that's not really model railroading. The other part asks how quickly I want to begin running trains. Plus, since I am planning a winter layout (perfect psychic relief for those hot Houston summer days), there would be snow on top of the ballast anyway.

To DCC or not to DCC; that is the question. I am sure a lot of *MRN* readers will be surprised that it even is a question; John Sipple assumed I would go with DCC when I talked with him about my plans and I have to agree it's tempting. DCC is much improved and has come way down in price since I first looked at Lenz systems 15 years ago. Operating with DCC is a lot of fun and, having spent many years in the electronics industry, I don't see any particular technical challenges. However, I do have a rather large "legacy" fleet of non-DCC locomotives of which I am rather fond. Some won't be particularly difficult to modify but others, including my early-90s Life-Like GP18s in Northern Pacific livery, don't seem to have a drop-in DCC solution. They aren't the fanciest locomotives but they would reliably pull a 50-car train for hours back when I was with Northwest Crossing Model Railroad Club running during one of our public setups.

Speaking of cars — that's one area where I am ready. All but a few of my freight cars were treated to Micro-Trains trucks and couplers years ago. There are some specialty cars to deal with, but I should be able to build my curves with a sufficiently large radius to allow me to use body-mounted couplers for those. However, there are so many nice new cars available today that I am sure there will be some new pieces in service.

One improvement I am excited about is steam. Back when I was buying locomotives, steam engines were generally of two types: the cheap ones that had two speeds, dead stop and Warp Factor 9, and the ones that performed like Swiss watches and carried similar price tags. That's changed in a big way. While they aren't as plentiful as they are in HO, today's N and Z steam engines are more plentiful and run better. Fortunately, just like you, I have the benefit of being able to read about the new locomotives right here in *Model Railroad News*.

So, with a number of pleasant tasks ahead of me, I can pick up where I left off years ago. What makes it even better is that I have new skills to learn and new products to try. And that's what makes model railroading such a great hobby.

— By Bill Cawthon

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16346

Fresh From The RPO Car

Stationary Sounds?

I have many HO model locos and after 44 years working on the real thing I still enjoy all of it. All my locos are for a display collection only and do not operate on a layout. Does anyone make a product where I would be able to just play the loco sounds available for DCC without being in a model?

Greg Randolph
Bend, OR

Thanks for writing, Greg.

What you're suggesting is actually a pretty good idea, but there are some problems there. First, each sound decoder maker has to collect sound samples from varying sources, and many locomotives have very different sounds to their horn or whistle, bell, chuff or diesel engine, and accessories in the background. Locomotives are complex machines and their sounds are not less so. These sound collections are not contributed to a single library of sounds; each company guards its own library very carefully, inserting those sounds into their decoders with elaborate electronic systems for playing them back.

There are test rollers made for HO and other scales, so if you have a favorite sound loco, you can place it on the test rollers and power it up for stationary playback. I think you'll quickly find that playing back more than one of them gets to be a lot of noise, so just pick one or two to convert. You could also locate sound recordings which have been marketed over the years. Also, many DVD videos have very nice soundtracks. Good luck! –John

Proto Mallet is better than tested

Imagine my surprise and pleasure to read your review of the new Rio Grande L-107 2-8-8-2 (*MRN*, August 2009) from Proto, only two days after picking one up at my local hobby shop here in Roseville.

Normally, I have shied away from Proto steam on my DC layout because of their poor pulling power, but the loco was so beautifully detailed I could not pass it up. I model Rio Grande standard-gauge steam, so naturally my motive power fleet is about 95 percent brass. Newer plastic steam in Rio Grande is as rare as a live Tyrannosaurus Rex, so it was a fairly easy decision to buy this particular one — despite my reservations on Proto Heritage steamers. However, I decided on this loco and figured, "Well, if it's a poor puller, I can always use it as a helper like Rio Grande did."

My layout is a rather large garage layout with 36-inch radius curves and sections of 2 to 2-1/4 grades. After running the loco in for about an hour, I hooked up about 12 cars behind it and watched it take a tour of the layout, grades and all. I was extremely impressed with the smooth, quiet operation and the incredible slow speed. And no spinning on the grades — a vast improvement on my other earlier Proto USRA Y-3 2-8-8-2, let me say. I added a few more cars, brought the total up to 20, and even at that, the loco crested a short 2-1/4 section of grade with very minimal spin.

So I think that the DC version, at least, is capable of even more cars than your test showed, at least on my layout. And possibly, as it gets run in, the pulling power might increase even a little more, which means I can give my 2-10-2s a little rest from 'drag freights,' LOL!

I'm very happy with it — it's certainly a loco that will earn its keep on my Yuba River Sub.

I enjoy your magazine very much, by the way. Your reviews are honest and insightful. Keep up the very good work.

Tom White
Carmichael, CA

Thanks for the kind words, Tom! We're always happy to hear when a product performs better than the test results. For those who may have missed the review, Associate Editor Dave Otte found our sample Mallet was able to pull 23 cars on a level grade. –Bill

Mallet vs. Diesels

Though a modern railroader, I still enjoy the reviews of older locomotives, especially when the model is as well done as the Heritage 2-8-8-2. But as I read the description of the prototype, I wondered how this would compare with today's motive power designed for the same job. According to the review, the USRA Mallet weighed 531,000 pounds and produced a tractive effort of 121,000 pounds. Given the purchasing railroads, I expect that these locos were primarily used to pull high-tonnage coal drags from the coal mines in the mountains. Today's equivalent would be a GE ES44AC (or EMD's AC unit), which according to the book *GE Evolution Locomotives* by Sean Graham-White has 145,000 pounds of tractive effort but weighs only 416,000 pounds. The new unit is lighter, smaller, and more powerful, but nowhere near as exciting to watch and experience as the Mallet must have been in its day as it thundered past with a fireman frantically shoveling to keep the steam up.

Roger Thomas
West Windsor, NJ

Hi Roger,

Actually, there was no way two firemen could have kept up, so these machines had coal stokers. These were in the Y3 drawings from N&W, who took those plans to the USRA. Steam locos were lucky if they could haul 20 percent of their weight, early diesels reached more like 25 percent, but with AC traction control systems, the modern locos can reach 40 percent of their weight. The figure you cite works out to around 35 percent, a very common number.

In comparing diesels to steam, it has been said that with steam, any train they could start they could pull. With diesels it was any train they could pull, they could start. Thus diesels have their surplus of power at the start while steam had its surplus at the high end. Tractive effort on diesels measures how much train it will start while horsepower is the measure of speed operations above 25 mph. The Mallets generally were restricted to around 25 mph top speed because their poor balancing of drivers led to track damage if they went much faster than that. –John

Alco-Blooper

Dave Carr's August 2009 review Atlas Alco: High Hood is High Value! provides some excellent information on the these units. The HH600/660 has been a

long sought after model by those of us who wanted a prototypically accurate steam-era diesel switcher. However, Atlas has only gone part of the way. Contrary to Dave's statement, "The HH660 replaced the HH600 with the use of the new 539 series with the 660 horsepower; however, externally, the 660 was identical in appearance to its predecessor." The last part of the statement far from accurately reflects what is prototypically correct.

As can be seen from Diesel Era's excellent resource book Alco's HH Series, the HH600 has some significant design differences in addition to the prime mover difference. The HH600 was produced from 1932 through 1940. During that period, the HH600 had design modifications to its frame and its hood face. The Atlas model clearly represents a HH660 and possible a very late HH600, which has the design features of a HH660 (although maybe a 600 HP prime mover).

It would be wonderful to have a HH600 produced by Atlas, but this would necessitate the changing of the frame (from one representing a welded frame to one which was cast), adding a roof vent, removing the louvers and one of the hood doors, as well as producing a "flat-nosed" hood with side vents protruding from the hood. The changes necessary to model a HH600 show clearly that there are significant differences between the HH600 and HH660 other than just the prime mover.

I really appreciate your reviews of new releases and the many helpful hints included such as installing the truck chains on these units. But, prototype data information sometimes leaves the wrong impression.

Awaiting the release of an HH600 in the real Northern California.

David Stickney
Red Bluff, CA

Hi David,

I must apologize because in the battle for brevity, sometime the loose change that falls out is quite valuable. In this case, it should have read, "...its immediate predecessor." And then it should be followed with something

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Model Railroad News

www.modelrailroadnews.com
Phone 541-955-1096 • Fax 541-955-0346

MAILING ADDRESS
P.O.BOX 1080 • Merlin, OR 97532-1080

COURIER ADDRESS (UPS, FedEx, DHL, etc.)
400 Galice Rd • Merlin, OR 97532

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Model Railroad News • P.O.Box 1080 • Merlin, OR 97532-1080 — ***Model Railroad News*** (ISSN 15334244) is published monthly by **LampLight Publishing,** 400 Galice Rd, Merlin, OR 97532. Annual subscription prices are U.S. $39.95 and Canada $39.95 (US$). Periodicals postage paid at Merlin, OR 97532 and additional mailing offices. **Editorial Material Submissions:** Send materials for editorial consideration to the addresses at the top of this page. **Advertising Rates:** Advertising rates are as low as $28 per issue. Call, write, e-mail, or fax for information or to request a Media Kit and Rate Card. All material in this publication, except where otherwise noted, is copyright ©2007 by LampLight Publishing and may not be reproduced in any form without prior written permission from the publisher. Trademarks, servicemarks, etc., where used, are the property of their respective owners.

like: "Earlier HH600s had noticeable outward differences." It's unlikely that Atlas would make the HH600 any time soon since they would have to choose a phase to model and cut a complete new shell mold and perhaps more, since these are people who like to do things right. The magic of the HH660 was that it remained relatively static during its production period, giving them a stationary target. –John

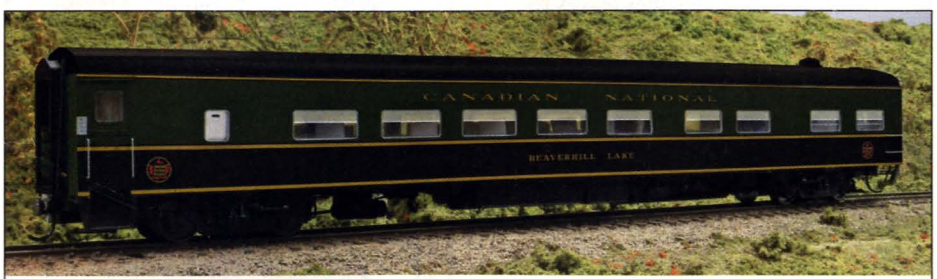
More S scale, please!

I enjoy reading your magazine each time it arrives in my mailbox and usually I go through it the first time rather quickly, savoring each article, especially the ones concerning "S" and "O" gauge equipment. Since I am interested in "S" gauge, I usually go right to "S Curves" by Mr. Karnes first. After reading his articles, I enjoy going back through the magazine and re-read it from cover to cover. It's really a good magazine and covers the model railroading scene nicely. Every issue is packed with something for almost everybody, and the new size is really great. Fits nicely with all the other railroad magazines I keep for reference. Thank you for doing such a bang-up-job each issue.

I enjoy reading the column called "Fresh From The RPO Car." If I might, I would like to comment on this month's issue (Aug 09). To Mr. Don Gilham of Broome, Norfolk, UK: I know how you feel as there are never enough articles on "S" gauge either. There is so much about three-rail "O" gauge but hardly ever anything about two-rail, and two-rail is so much more realistic than three-rail. Two-rail track is one of the reasons I chose American Flyer instead of Lionel when I was a boy. My father was a track Foreman on the Missouri-Illinois Railroad (part of the Missouri-Pacific Lines) and I never saw a real train run on three-rail track. I was only eight years old when I mowed lawns and bought my first American Flyer train. Boy was that a thrill for me and I still have that train, and it still runs. Hang in there, Mr. Gilham!

Also I know the feeling that one gets when a product is purchased and it falls apart before it's even a year old. And when you try to get satisfaction, all you get is a run-around from the dealer or manufacturer. So Mr. Engle of West Chester, OH, I know what you mean when you write about your engine now living up to its potential. I have had a great deal of trouble with S Helper Service freight trucks coming apart, with springs flying everywhere and derailing the train only to find the truck is useless because the springs have flown somewhere, never to be found again. They can't be repaired so that means one must fork over more money to repair the car and replace the truck. It's very annoying, to say the least, as well as can be expensive. I do wish to comment on the fine quality of the cars S Help Service sells. Some of them are really beautiful, especially the boxcars (reefers). I have several and enjoy watching them roll by as my American Models Northern 4-8-4 chugs down the track pulling perhaps twenty boxcars, all different.

One of your readers commented about the Mississippi Mallets and speaking of mallets, I would like to see an article concerning the Lionel Union Pacific Big Boy in "S" gauge that was supposed to be out a year ago. I paid my money but I have yet to see any locomotive or even heard about what has happened to it. How about someone writing an article describing in detail what it does, what



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Pre-production sample shown. Roof lines and vents not yet added.

features it has, and when we can expect delivery? Thanks.

Well, I have rolled down the track long enough and have reached the roundhouse, so I will close. Thanks for considering my article and also for a fine magazine, which I appreciate each and every time it comes in the mail.

Bill Jones
Salem, IL

Hello Bill,

There's a lot in your letter, so I'll only respond to some of it. We are making a concerted effort to cover more O-scale 2-rail and S-scale, and are actively seeking samples of that type to review. Locomotives in that group will be given full By-The-Numbers testing, and if they are DCC-ready, we'll select and install the appropriate decoder, and add it to the testing suite. As the only All-Scales journal in the hobby, we definitely want to reach into those areas.

As to the Big Boy, you should know our longstanding General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR). We don't review preproduction samples, so we won't issue any sort of review on the product until we've actually held it in our hands. That means it is very likely for sale while we are writing the review unless we receive a production sample ahead of the release. This guarantees that what we test, photograph, and write about is the same thing as what you will receive. Until we receive a copy of the model, we'll run press releases from the maker about it, but we won't chase down information about its production because that's subject to change at any time.

Bill sent us a photo of his S-scale empire. Check out the carnival rides in the background. Photo by Bill Jones.

There are trucks in every scale that disassemble themselves under the wrong circumstances. One model railroader I know takes a car with this type of truck, dips the point of a pin into CA glue, and applies just a drop to each end of each spring. He claims he's never had a spring take off on him nor does this procedure interfere with normal operation. I'd let the car sit for a day before putting it to work. –John

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REVIEW HO

MTH delivers triumphant J-Class in HO

Norfolk & Western's mighty J-class runs the rails again

Somehow, those ol' boys down in Roanoke understood what "elegant" was all about, and the J had it all. In later years, when they were reduced to pulling freight, folks still lined up by the tracks to watch them roll by.

Review and Photos by John Sipple

Norfolk & Western No. 611 4-8-4 J Steam Locomotive w/Proto-Sound 3.0, (#80-3146-1) MSRP: $449.95

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By-The-Numbers

4-8-4 J Class
MTH
HO 1:87 • Type: Steam
Traction Tires? Yes

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷ Loco Wt	= Efficiency
9.1	23.3	39.1%

Analog DC

Start Volts = 9.3

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
9.3	0.22	1
13	0.20	27
16	0.38	83

DCC

Stall Amps (if applicable)

Speed Step (of 128)		Scale MPH
Min	1	1
Mid	63	66
Top	126	76

MTH DCS

Voltage Step (of 120)		Scale MPH
Min	1	1
Mid	60	63
Top	120	120

SOMEONE once inquired as to why the Norfolk & Western didn't just build locomotives for other railroads, putting them in that business. Having seen the products from the railroad's shops at Roanoke, Virginia, shipped to other railroads as hand-me-downs, it seemed a good question. The answer was better: N&W tailored their engines to run their tracks. At one end of the railroad was Norfolk, Virginia on the Atlantic Ocean, and the Western was a reference to the places in Ohio at the other end. The railroad had coal spurs splitting off every so often and enjoyed a stream of mixed freight going both ways, so it was a busy mainline.

However, they also had to run passenger traffic. N&W maintained their track to very high standards in all dimensions, and so folks could get a nice ride on the Powhatan Arrow or one of the other premium trains. The grades could be fierce and long, and their fleet of 4-6-2 Pacifics and 4-8-2 Mountains were having trouble with the increasing train size. They needed a 4-8-4 with both pull and speed. When Roanoke designed an engine, they were likely to reconsider anything. After all, when the conventional wisdom said a compound articulated Mallet was old hat and no longer relevant, N&W perfected the design to create the giant 2-8-8-2 Y-class. Then they turned around and proved they were open-minded by creating the marvelous 2-6-6-4 A-class that featured simple articulation.

Built in three groups with the earlier groups upgraded to the standards of the last batch, the final J configuration offered 27- by 32-inch cylinders, 70-inch drivers, 300 psi boiler pressure, a weight of 494,000 pounds, and a rated tractive effort of 80,000 pounds, that latter being the greatest tractive figure of all the 4-8-4 designs. The first batch of five was delivered in 1941-42 with streamlining and alloy rods but with less boiler pressure and reduced tractive effort. The second group contained six delivered in 1943 under wartime restrictions. This resulted in no streamlining and larger steel rods. The final batch of three arrived in 1950, by which time the older machines had been brought up to the same standards stated above, including streamlining, alloy rods, and roller bearing journals.

In one test, the mighty J pulled a string of 15 long passenger cars weighing 910 tons at 110 mph. This was at once a vindication of the desire for speed and pull, while proving the quality of the track. The last group served only nine years until they were replaced by diesels, but in that time, they each averaged over 15,000 miles a month on a railroad whose longest run from Norfolk to Cincinnati tallied 676 miles. Of the 14 built, only one survives, Number 611. It is now a well-kept museum display.

MTH's J-Class

There were a lot of 4-8-4 Northerns built, though many of them were called something other than Northerns. In typical simplicity, N&W settled for the letter "J," and that was enough. All 4-8-4s are of historical importance, but I'm not sure all are worthy of being modeled. This one is, however, and is a stunningly

handsome locomotive because Roanoke hid the plumbing on the boiler under the jacket, giving it a smooth and unfettered look. This model captures the spirit very nicely.

Detail is subtle but it's most certainly there. Along the top of the skyline casing you'll find the stack opening, the whistle in its depression, sand fill caps, the four brass pop-off valves and so on back to the cab roof with its roof hatches, modeled closed, the realistic coal load in the tender and the back deck with its water hatch. Not included but desirable would be the water tender that usually followed behind the tender. Crews sometimes referred to these auxiliary water haulers as "canteens."

Streamlining was a funny business because it had less to do with aerodynamics than marketing. Freight didn't care about streamlining, but passengers did. If some of the streamline efforts covered the gamut from silly to grotesque and on to magnificent, the J's streamlining was simple and understated in a way that could only be described as "elegant." The rounded nose dome with the imbedded headlamp and numberboards are all modeled, as is the simple side skirt that didn't interfere with N&W's amazing servicing facilities.

Above this is the chrome-like handrails and classification lights. Purists will screech that they are too shiny and a bit too large, but these items have enough durability to withstand actual operation. The front-end throttle is modeled on the engineer's side. Down below, the rods have the look of the roller bearing alloy construction. I consider the valve gear connecting rod to be too short, leading to the eccentric rod canting upward in front too far. This is a minor complaint, however, and most folks don't know about those things. They may be more cognizant of the ashpan, which offers greater clearance than the prototype because the model's rear truck requires some extra clearance.

In terms of wheels and other running gear, this machine is quite close to the prototype, with a few notable exceptions. The front truck is a bit too far forward, probably to provide clearance with the cylinders in tight curves. The wheels are 68.2 inches in diameter against the prototype's 70 inches, nothing you would notice in operation, nor would you notice the slight spread in axle spacing in the drivers from back to front. Again, no biggie, all of this being a concession to model railroading flanges.

The tender draw bar leaves the grocery cart about 2.4 scale feet farther back than it should be, but shortening it isn't an option. The drawbar contains two connecting wires, and unless MTH created a version with multiple holes in the drawbar, this will have to be it. The model features nice side frames on the Lewis six-wheel trucks while providing pickup on all the wheels, a design that should be at least pondered by the rest of the industry.

Operations

This model parallels the Triplex, being like the rest of MTH's in supporting DC/DCC and MTH's proprietary DCS. The nitty-gritty on DC is fairly simple if you start with the understanding that this locomotive is rated to run at 24VDC. Now also understand the misunderstanding that some have passed around, that MTH uses 24 volt instead of 12 volt motors like the rest of the HO world. Let's address that right from the start.

MTH uses a quality 12VDC motor. The 24 Volt acceptance level on the model is due to the internal electronics, and like all other 12-volt DC motors, it can handle considerable over-voltage, though that doesn't become a reality until this model faces more than 24 volts. However, if we're going to test this thing's DC performance in a meaningful way, we'll need to take it up to 24 volts. This will give us results somewhat skewed compared to other HO locos, and guys with power controllers that don't get up to that voltage won't be able to duplicate it.

The model arrives without standard couplers installed, but they are included. The pilot is delivered with a swing-around pilot cover with a dummy behind. It is too small to couple with a standard HO magnetic knuckle. For the nose, I'd choose a #142, Short Centerset shank with whisker, even though it will stick out too far. The tender is easy, though the resulting installation left the trip pin hanging too low. I would prefer to install a Kadee #144, Short Underset shank with a whisker, but you could clip off the trip pin and put up with a coupler head that's a little low.

DCS Results

We need to grasp the MTH vision of model train operation to appreciate what is being offered here. DCS supplies the purchaser with an impressive interface,

Even from behind, this is one classy lady. The coupler was not yet installed when I took the photo, though it's not much of a job. Just plan to put it on before you install the drawbar and rail 'er up. The coal load is heaped fairly convincingly and the back-up light works, too!

A lot of thought and very good engineering went into this product. Check out the truck on the tender. Both trucks use this elaborate, reliable, and high quality power pickup to get juice with all 12 tender wheels. All eight drivers are working for you, too. MTH included a Standard HO magnetic knuckle type coupler, so your favorite brand might substitute for the included plastic couplers.

at once simple and yet offering plenty of opportunities. Whether you use the DCS big system or the less expensive DCS Commander, there's lots of fun to be had.

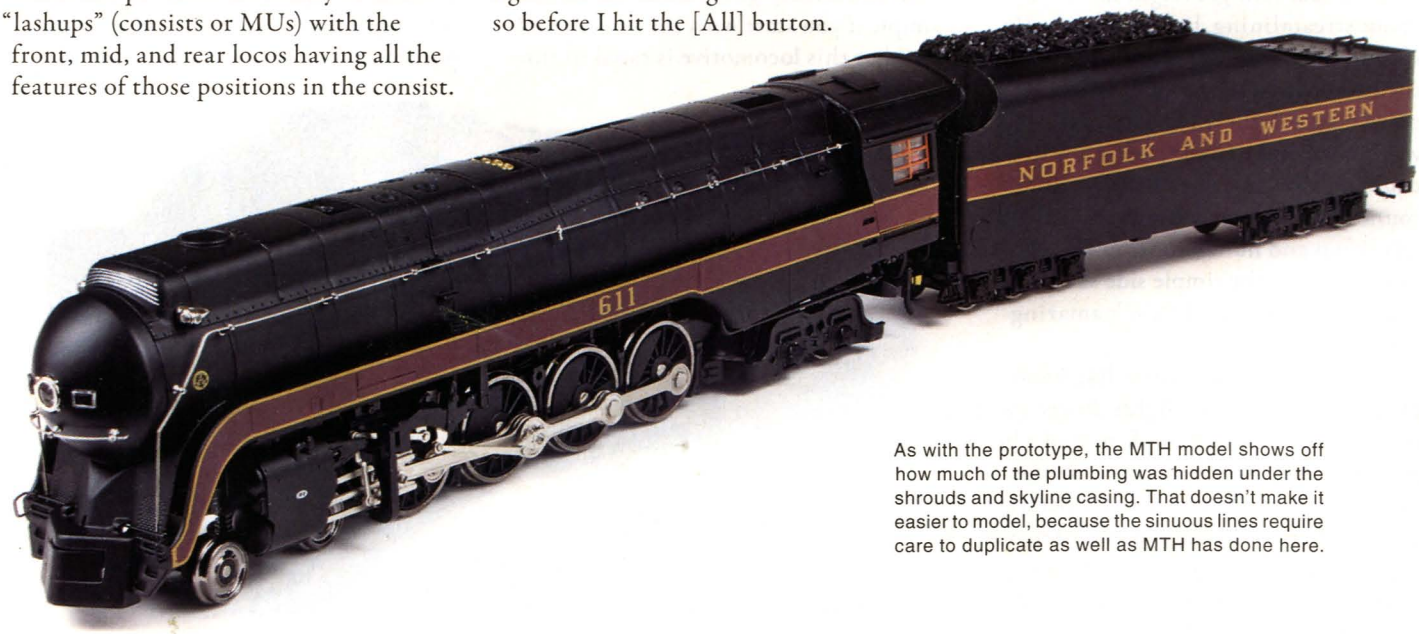
Along the way, they have made some decisions about what will be available, and since so much is, it may take a while to figure out what's not there. DCS offers two different operating systems: the larger DCS Remote Control System and the DCS Commander. DCS stands for "Digital Command System" and is NOT DCC, though the locomotive will also operate under DCC. My colleague, David Otte, tells me the DCS-RCS controller provides the ability to create "lashups" (consists or MUs) with the front, mid, and rear locos having all the features of those positions in the consist. The Commander doesn't offer this facility, but you can operate multiple locos at the same time using the [All] button. It lives up to its name, so unless you have some method of cutting power to the locos you don't want to move, the whole layout will be entered in the Synchronized Swimming Event.

I doubleheaded "J" with MTH's SP 4449 *Daylight*, and that was fun, since they never met in real life, so far as I know. MTH takes the time to speed match all of its locos to a set standard, so "J" and *Daylight* ran very well together in DC and DCS. In the company's proprietary DCS, I was able to shut off the lights on the trailing loco but had to do so before I hit the [All] button.

DCC Operation

Your J-class will operate very nicely on DCC. Just press F3 to start it up and she's all ready to go. Virtually all functions — from 0 to 28 — have something going on, some lights but more of them sounds. Sound quality is good because this is a big plus MTH is importing from the larger 3-rail world. Neither of the DCS systems actually supply DCC signals or power, so you'll have to already have your own DCC system. The Commander offers a "pass-through" option that lets you switch from DCS to DCC. I suspect most applications will be dedicated DCC operators who wish to add this gorgeous model to their operations.

MTH has skipped support of advanced consisting in DCC. The locomotive's decoder only has CVs 1, 3, 4, 17 & 18, 29, 49, 50 & 51, and 55. Advance consisting variables 19 and 21 – 24 are not offered, nor are speed adjusting 2, 5, and 6. These latter three are used to dial in a loco's speed performance in part so it will operate better with another locomo-



As with the prototype, the MTH model shows off how much of the plumbing was hidden under the shrouds and skyline casing. That doesn't make it easier to model, because the sinuous lines require care to duplicate as well as MTH has done here.

The J took to the rails like a giant projectile in real life, and now you can duplicate the sights and sounds of this glorious machine. The drawbar is obviously a bit on the long side, but the rest of it looks very good, and it runs so nicely.

tive. Given that MTH locos are factory speed-matched to each other, these CVs might not be necessary, at least on an MTH-only layout.

Programming the included CVs is only possible via Programming On the Main, which is wise considering the sound system. The loco arrives with CV1, the two-digit address set at 3, and the four-digit address at 3333, but you can change either one using a command station that allows altering a loco's address on the main.

If you wish to consist two MTH locos together in DCC, I'd suggest you consider Basic Consisting, which is the product of giving both locos the same address. This can be awkward if you constantly change consist members at the ends of runs, in the fashion of real railroads. Digitrax and others offer consisting that doesn't require CVs. I gave the Digitrax a try and found it worked perfectly! I sent them around Loop 1, an 18-inch radius obstacle course that is accessed by a pair of #4 switches. They ran just fine. If I wanted some doubleheading with another brand of loco, I would have to modify its speed curve to match the MTH.

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes

During Pull Testing, the loco pulled 0.64 amps while operating with the smoke unit enabled. With the smoker shut off, the loco pulled just 0.22 amps, about a third. This isn't surprising, given the volume of smoke this machine puts out. The smoke is synchronized to the chuff, pumping out prodigious smoke oil vapor. When the loco stopped, it would then pump out a vertical stream as steamers sometimes did.

Frankly, I like smoke outside and not so much indoors. This little HO loco pumped out more smoke volume than most of my Large Scale equipment! Very quickly, the train room became pretty smoky and the smoke detector went off. Thankfully, we have a couple of choices regarding smoke output. First, we can shut it off with a switch under the tender's water hatch. We can also shut it off using [F8] in DCC or the [SMK] button in DCS. The DCS environment actually gives you three level of smoke output, and MTH offers smoke oil with a variety of scents.

"J" is for Joy

So what we have here is a lovely and accurate model that's also very entertaining to run. You don't have to own a DCS system to enjoy this machine, but if you already have a DCS system, you're good to go. It will run very nicely on DC. Despite the limited programmability under DCC, it is quite pleasant to operate it there, too.

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Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey cars continue to entertain

Z, N & HOn3 — Micro-Trains has released the third Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey billboard car for N- and Z-scale. Also available in Z-scale is a 40-foot standard boxcar, two 40-foot flat cars, a center cupola steel caboose, and two baggage cars. Available in N-scale is a 56-foot general service tank car, a 43-foot three-bay Ortner rapid discharge hopper, two 61-foot bulkhead flatcars, the thirteenth boxcar of the Presidency series, and three 50-foot standard boxcars. A 30-foot flat car has been released for HOn3.

N and Z Scale

A new wood-sheathed car has been released for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. It is the third billboard car of the series. The car is painted brown and features a colorful representation of an actual Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey poster promoting their clown acts. Clowns have played an important role in Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey history, each with their own unique character, costume, and makeup design. These mirth-makers specialize in a variety of skills from slapstick, juggling, and comedic gags to stilt-walking, unicycling, and daredevil feats, all requiring physical discipline, athleticism, and skill. The boxcar is available in N-scale (#047 00 402) retailing for $25.95, and Z-scale (#515 00 602) retailing for $29.95.

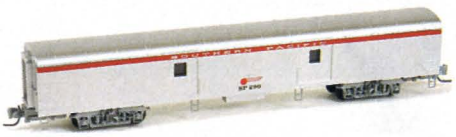
Z Scale

A new 40-foot standard boxcar with plug door is available for the state of Alabama. It is the fifteenth car of a 50-car series representing each of the 50 states in the union. It bears the Yellowhammer and Camellia, Alabama's official state bird and flower. The flag of the state of Alabama is in the background. The roadnumber, 1819, represents the year the 'Heart of Dixie' was admitted into the union. The boxcar (#502 00 515) retails for $22.95.

Two 40-foot flat cars with generator loads are painted black with white logos and lettering for New York Central. It is available for roadnumbers NYC 480755, and NYC 480810. The flat cars were built in August 1942 and run on Roller Bearing trucks. Originally numbered into the 499300 – 499599 series, these flat cars were converted to auto frame cars and renumbered into the new series 480750 – 480849 in the early 1960s. The flat cars (#525 00 151 & #525 00 152) retail for $19.10 each.

A center cupola steel caboose has been released for Chesapeake & Ohio. It is painted dark blue with yellow logo and lettering. It was built in July 1937, rebuilt in February 1969, and runs on Bettendorf trucks. C&O 3559 was part of the first group of 75 units to be rebuilt in C&O's caboose rebuilding program back in 1969 – 1970. They were rebuilt, repainted into the blue scheme, and renumbered into series 3500 – 3574. The caboose (#535 00 270) is available for $23.95.

A passenger baggage car is available for Pennsylvania Railroad. It is painted Tuscan Red with black roof and buff logo and lettering, and is available for roadnumber 7905. It was built in February 1926 by Pressed Steel Car Co. and runs on black passenger trucks. This car is marked between the doors for the Railway Express Agency, which offered priority handling of small shipments in passenger train baggage cars. The baggage car (#553 00 060) retails for $26.60.



A new passenger baggage car has been released for Southern Pacific. It is painted aluminum with scarlet red band and logo, gray 'Southern Pacific' and black lettering. The available roadnumber is SP 296. It was delivered to the SP in 1950, and runs on passenger trucks. In 1950 the streamlined *Sunset Limited* went into service between Los Angeles and New Orleans. The cars were stainless steel with a red letterboard, known as the Sunset paint scheme. The baggage car (#553 00 070) retails for $26.60.

N Scale

A 56-foot general service tank car is now available for DOW Chemical. It is painted blue with red ends, belly, and underframe, and has multicolor logos. The lettering is in yellow. MCVX 72223 was built in August 1972, serviced in March 2008, and runs on Barber Roller Bearing trucks. The tank car is part of a consist of cars that travel regionally each year to provide free safety training to emergency responders. The program is provided by TRANSCAER (Transportation Community Awareness and Emergency Response), a voluntary outreach effort focusing on training communities to prepare and respond to a possible hazardous material transportation incident in partnership with companies, in this case DOW chemicals. The tank car (#110 00 130) retails for $34.75.

A 43-foot three-bay Ortner rapid discharge hopper with sand load is painted for Blue Circle Cement. It is painted yellow with a blue logo and blue lettering and numbered for WBCX 80053. The hopper was built in 1994 by the Ortner Freight Car Co. of Cincinnati, OH and runs on Barber Roller Bearing trucks. Blue Circle was the leading

producer and supplier of quality cements to the Southeastern United States construction industry for many years, serving customers in 32 states and two Canadian provinces. In 2001, Lafarge S.A., the parent of Lafarge Corporation, acquired Blue Circle Industries PLC and became the world's largest cement producer. The hopper (#125 00 090) retails for $24.90.

Two 61-foot bulkhead flat cars are painted sky blue with white lettering for Great Northern. The roadnumbers are TGN 160331 and 160335. They were built in June 1968 and run on Barber Roller Bearing trucks. The Great Northern was the creation of the 19th century railroad tycoon James J. Hill and was developed from the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. The Great Northern's route was the northernmost transcontinental railroad route in the United States. The flat cars (#054 00 181 and #054 00 182) retail for $20.75 each.

A 40-foot standard boxcar with plug door and no roofwalk is the thirteenth car of a 44-car series representing each of the presi-

dents of the United States. It bears the portrait of our 19th president, Rutherford B. Hayes. The roadnumber 1877-1881 represents the term of his presidency. Hayes' decision to favor Paraguay in arbitration following the War of the Triple Alliance in South America made him a hero. A city, a regional historical museum, schools, roads as well as a soccer team in Paraguay were named for him. The boxcar (#074 00 113) retails for $23.95. An FT A-unit for the series (#987 01 611) is now available for $99.95.

A 50-foot standard boxcar with plug doors is now available for Nickel Plate Road. It is painted boxcar red with black ends. The Nickel Plate Road herald is white and the car is lettered in white. NKP 84147 was built in December 1963 by General American's East Chicago Shops; it runs on Bettendorf trucks. Nickel Plate Road had its origin in 1881. It was merged into the Norfolk and Western on October 16, 1964. Its reporting marks began to be listed under N&W in the 1965 issue of the Official Railway Equipment Registry (ORER). The Nickel Plate reporting marks carried over to the N&W and the new Norfolk Southern and ceased to be listed after the July 1998 issue of ORER. The boxcar (#032 00 410) retails for $17.10.

A 50-foot standard boxcar with plug door and no roofwalk is painted yellow with aluminum roof and ends for Union Pacific. It bears the red, white, and blue UP shield with the company's 1970s-era slogan "We can handle it" in red. Lettering is in black and red. It is available for roadnumber UP 492876. The car was built in February 1964, serviced in May 1976, and runs on Barber Roller Bearing trucks. Cars in this series were originally built by the UP at the

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Omaha Shops in February 1964 and numbered in the 499900 series. They were serviced and renumbered into the 492801 – 492970 series in May 1976. During the 1970s, UP began applying the "We Can Handle It" slogan to their freight. The boxcar (#038 00 240) retails for $22.30.

A 50-foot standard boxcar with double plug doors and no roofwalk is available for British Columbia Railway. It is painted dark green with light green right plug door. It bears the BCR Dogwood Flower logo, is lettered in white, and runs on Barber Roller Bearing trucks. The roadnumber is BCIT 800480. This car was built in February 1974 by U.S. Railway Manufacturing Co. of Blue Island, IL. Cars designated 'BCIT' apply to an international series used only on traffic between Canada and the United States, while cars designated 'BCOL' can be used on shipments moving within Canada or on international movements. This car is ideally suited for commodities such as lumber where a wider than normal opening is required. The plug doors give additional strength with the convenience of a wider door opening. The boxcar (#075 00 120) is available for $24.80.

HOn3 Scale

A 30-foot flat car with log load is painted boxcar red with white lettering for Colorado & Southern. It is available for roadnumber C&S 7127 and includes user-

installed detail parts. It was built early in the 20th century by St. Charles Car Works of St. Charles, MO, serviced in July 1938, and runs on Bettendorf trucks. Originally built for the Colorado and Southern as stock car series 7015 – 7134 in the early 1900s, many of these cars were stripped down to their decks and used as flat cars without changing the reporting marks or reassigning the cars to a different series. The flat car (#855 00 010) retails for $36.90.

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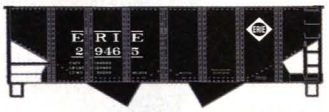

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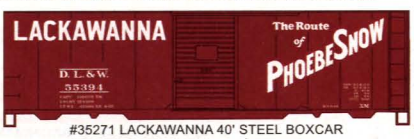

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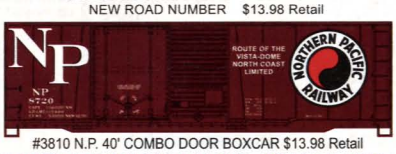

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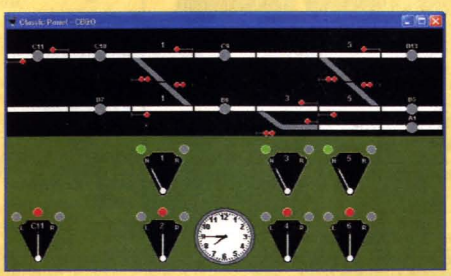

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REVIEW N

What the Boxcars Said:

Some Athearn N 50-footers tell Tall Tales

Review by Al Skinner
Photos by Al Skinner and John Sipple

50-Foot PS-1 Single Door Box Cars, MSRP: $18.98
Multiple Cars Reviewed:
Conrail 208864 (ATH14157)
D&RGW 60502 (ATH14159)
RI 50463 & 50468 (ATH 14161 & 14162)
SAL 15062 (ATH14164)
WM 34077 (ATH14167)

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THE BOX contained six new Athearn N-scale 50-foot PS-1 single-door boxcars, painted in the colors of the Seaboard Air Line, Western Maryland, Denver and Rio Grande Western, "Rock" (CRIP), and Conrail. But I didn't just see freight cars. I saw a story for each one. They weren't on the boxes. They weren't the clean, even paint jobs, with no overspray, overlap, or fuzzy edges where two colors meet. No, the stories were in the paint scheme and stencil data on each. A model railroad car's paint job isn't just telling you the roadname — it's also saying something about that car's era, place, and purpose.

Of the stories these cars told were some that I just couldn't believe. Maybe it's me, maybe not. I'll let you judge for yourself when I go over each car's particulars. For now, let's look at some background.

The Prototype

Before WWII, the only motorized things running into and out of boxcars were automobiles. Essentially self-loading, they did need a big opening to drive through (at an angle) and, as autos got bigger and heavier, a boxcar with larger capacity was required. This need evolved into the steel 50-foot boxcar with double doors of seven feet or more in width each.

Following the mechanized war and its effect on transportation systems, something else besides the automobile was running in and out of boxcars: the forklift. Loading pre-packed pallets, a forklift was faster and more efficient than a man carrying pieces or using a two-wheeler. Couple the forklift with a need for increased car capacity and the 50-foot boxcar became the new "standard" car. Forklifts did not need as large an opening as cars, so they started out with single seven-foot doors in the 1940s. Cars were built or refitted with wider doors as time went on. They were also built with plug doors, plug-sliding doors, etc., but those are not the models covered here.

Pullman-Standard began producing its PS-1 series of 50-foot boxcars in 1949. Basically a stretched version of the 40-foot PS-1, these cars were built through the 1960s. This is the prototype for the Athearn model. It has a nine-foot-wide, corrugated door with riveted, full-length, deep sill.

The Model

Athearn's models have finely molded plastic shells with crisp detail. Stirrups are molded as part of the shell. The doors do not open. The only separately applied parts are the brake wheel and etched-metal see-through running board. It's a square-mesh pattern painted to match the roof, with L-shaped cutouts on the ladder platforms. These fit over a raised L-grab iron body casting in the roof that then seems part of the walkway. As mentioned in an earlier review of Athearn cars of a similar type, the running board may spring loose in the center and bow upward, maybe because these fixed end fastenings don't let the metal expand. Plastic trucks, with McHenry couplers and low-profile one-piece wheel/axle sets of fixed gauge, are screw-attached to a metal frame that is glued into the shell. Detail on the roller-bearing trucks is well defined, and the underbody equipment is bas-relief on the one-piece casting. However, with the deep sills it's hard to see the underbody details from the side.

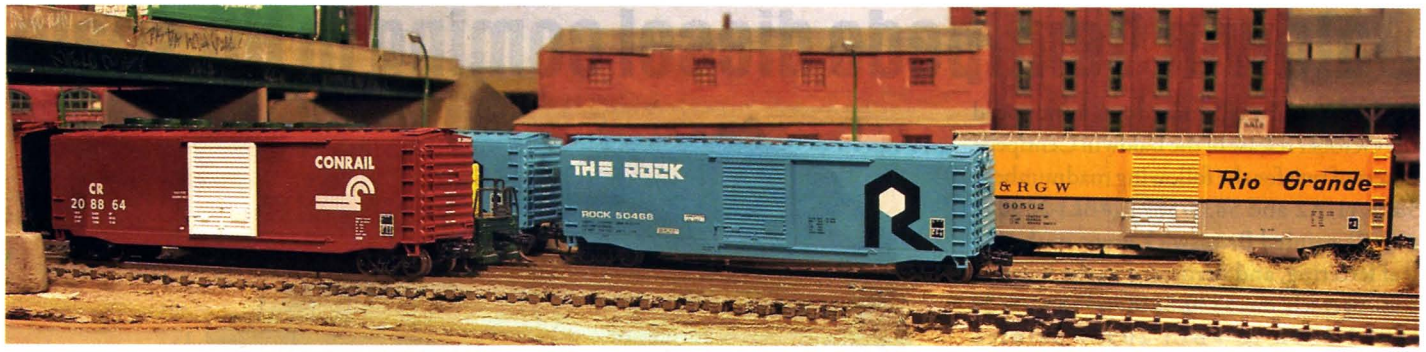
The Stories

The saying goes, "A picture says a thousand words." Prototypical freight cars are rolling picture stories that an experienced eye can decipher. But in creating the model, sometimes the story gets garbled or misrepresented. Whether one decides to believe the story or the error is the question. So let's listen to what each of these boxcars have to say.

Seaboard Air Line 15062

Painted a slightly darker green than the Southern Railway's, and sporting the "Heart" logo, this car's stencils proclaim it has just been built in 12/62. The benefits of "Cushion Underframe" — SAL's name for the load-cushioning feature developed for the SP in the 1950s and still something for railroads to brag about — are in large letters on the side. However, this car is fudging a little because it doesn't have the telltale extended coupler pockets of this system. The "silver" doors represent the original as-built aluminum doors, so this car is

Two PS-1 fifty footers in fresh new paint schemes from southern climes roll through the bustle and grittiness of industrial Chicago, circa 1963.



Almost twenty years later and PS-1s are still rolling through the same scene — but new economic realities have made great changes. BRAIN TEASER: Name the loco model and roadname of the engine peeking out behind CR 208864 in this picture.

still very new. Soon after putting them in service, the SAL discovered that aluminum doors didn't stand up to heavy usage and replaced them with regular steel doors. More change was to come for this car: the merger with the Atlantic Coast Line (and the passing of the SAL paint scheme) is only four and a half years away.

Western Maryland 34077

With boxcar red paint and the white "speed lettering" adopted in 1954 spelling out the railroad's name, this car also advertises "DF" ("Damage-Free") in large letters — which again, is not represented by the stock couplers. Still, the painted yellow circle with an "R" near the reporting marks honestly informs us it is equipped with roller-bearing trucks. And since roller-bearing trucks gave less resistance to the axles than friction-bearing ones, the yellow-painted top of the car ends warn the crew, when doing setouts, to make sure the car doesn't "get away." The car data gives a build date of 8/61, and being shopped in 4/63 (probably for new RB trucks). A nice beginning, but before the end of the decade the Western Maryland will disappear into the Chessie System.

Denver & Rio Grande Western 60502

Decked out in the brilliant "Aspen Gold/Silver" two-tone color scheme introduced to freight cars in 1954, this car is visually enhanced by side ladders, grab irons, and stirrups delicately touched with the gold over the silver lower half.

These details thus appear to be separately applied — a true wonder of the modern painting process. For your additional amazement, on the car body inside the ladder rungs is "Work Safely" in solid, readable print.

But a pretty face isn't always a true one. First, the "Aspen Gold" is more orange than gold. This is a color perception error to which many manufacturers fall prey and need not be discussed further. Second, the stencil gives the car a build date of 1954, and last shopped in 1973. Which means this car should not have a running board, full height ladders, or high position brake wheel. In 1966, the Federal Railroad Administration issued an order that no more cars were to be built with running boards. Furthermore, cars with existing running boards were to be converted when they came in for their normal maintenance. It took a while, but by the mid 1970s there were no more cars with running boards operating in interchange service. Third, for those who say nobody reads those tiny numbers, so who cares, the consolidation stencils (the black-painted boxes with white outlines near the ladders on each side) is a very noticeable sign that this car is existing in the mid to late 1970s. This is when (1974) consolidation stencils became accepted practice among the railroads. Fourth (and here it's just a supposition), if this car is painted to represent one from the mid-1970s, it should also have the multi-bar Automatic Car Identification (ACI) plate somewhere on the lower half of each side. ACI plates were used until 1977.

The Rock (Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific) 50463 & 50468

Shop-painted 1/78 in the brave new "ROCK" paint scheme, nicknamed "Bankruptcy Blue" by some, these markings show two nearly-obsolete cars, kept working by the struggling Rock Island in dedicated service for ammunition loading only. But new paint and nickname will not save the "ROCK"; for in less than two years it will collapse and disappear. This is another beautiful and finely detailed paint job, but the running board and full ladders jar that vision. Though there could be a slight possibility the Rio Grande car version could have existed, these two are asking us to really stretch the truth that they did.

Conrail 208864

Conrail, starting operations in 1976 with the horribly-degraded equipment and trackage of the Penn Central and other bankrupt railroads, shopped and repainted this aging PS-1 at the end of 1980. This car may have been rusted and abused and may be way past its service life. But maybe Conrail needed it for use with an old feed processing plant in the Northeast that has bulk loading facilities for boxcars only. Cleaned up, repaired, repainted, with a new plywood interior and white doors to signify food product loading only, this car could almost make me believe its story of being around in 1981. But still carrying running boards and full-length ladders? Sorry, no.

...The End of the Story?

Athearn has made a fine model here. They have done superb work with the body, and quality and lettering of the paint schemes and car signage is admirable. But they did not do all their homework. Can a model be "almost" prototypical? Like I said, we each have to decide this ourselves.

My hope is that Athearn is working on a non-running board version of this PS-1. If so, they would be able to cover every paint scheme this car had, prototypically. So instead of just a few roadnames of these excellent renditions, the precise-minded model railroader could choose from their entire selection. Then this could be a story with a happy ending for everybody.

Baldwin Centipede diesel coming in HO scale

HO — Broadway Limited has announced the October release of the Baldwin Centipede in sets of two for the following roadnumbers: 5828A1/A2 and 5833/5821 (#BLI-2090 & #2091) painted Brunswick green with gold leaf lettering, and decorated in the 5-Stripe passenger scheme; 5830/5818 and 5834/5822 (#BLI-2092 & #BLI-2093) painted Brunswick green with buff lettering, and decorated in the Single-Stripe freight scheme; and 6000A/6000B (#BLI-2094) painted dark blue and cream. They retail for $449.99 per set.

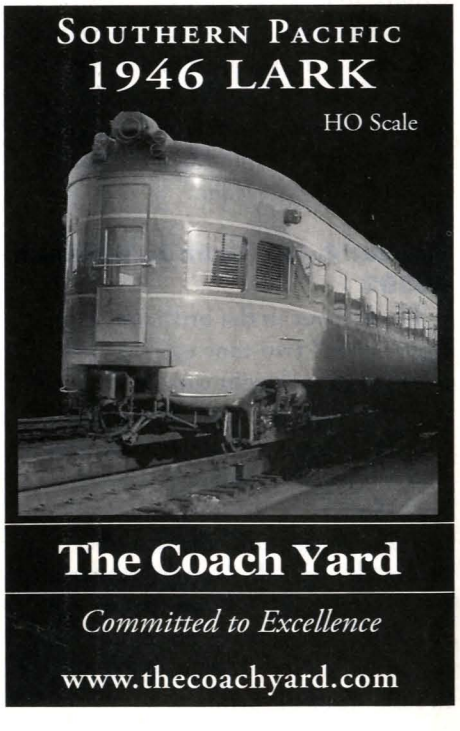
The centipede is also available as single units for the following numbers: 5833 and 5821 (#BLI-2095 & #BLI-2096) with Trainphone Antennae, and painted Brunswick green with gold leaf lettering in the 5-Stripe passenger scheme; the SAL Centipede 4505 and 4512 (#BLI-2097 & #BLI-2098) painted in the freight scheme; and the NdeM Centipede 6402 (#BLI-2099) is painted dark green, red, and yellow. The locomotives retail for $249.99 each.

According to BLI, the Centipedes feature a Paragon2 Sound and Control System, integral DCC decoder with back EMF for slow speed operation in DC and DCC, Precision Drive Mechanism engineered for continuous heavy load towing and smooth slow speed operation, 5-Pole Can Motor with Skew Wound Armature, premium caliber painting with authentic paint schemes, prototypical light operation with golden white LED headlight, operating metal knuckle couplers, factory installed engineer and firemen figures, Near-Brass caliber detail at a Plastic Price. A minimum radius of 22-inches or greater recommended.

It will reportedly operate in DC and DCC (use DCMaster for DC sound); Auto Pilot (ATS) to record and play back sound and movement sequences for automated operation (Macro Operation), Playable Whistle for multiple whistle lengths and patterns Choice of three selectable Whistles/Horns, Alternate Whistle/Horn where applicable for locomotives with air horn and steam whistle — both the main whistle and alternate can be easily played; adjustable bell ringing interval for faster or slower bell; numerous user-mappable functions with available keys; Passenger Station Ambient Sounds controlled with Function Key; and Freight Yard Ambient Sounds controlled with Function Key.

Baldwin produced the famous "Centipede" diesel locomotives during 1945-48, and sold them to three railroads (SAL, NdM, and PRR). The Centipedes were very large, 91-1/2 feet long for single units as operated on SAL and NdM, and 183 feet long for semi-permanently-coupled pairs as operated on the PRR. Each unit contained two 1,500 horsepower diesel motors, so a pair contained four motors and totaled 6,000 horsepower. Centipedes were heavy, totaling 1,200,000 pounds (1.2 million) for a pair, with more than 800,000 of those pounds carried by the 16 drivers.

Broadway Limited Imports, LLC, 4 Signal Ave. STE C, Ormond Beach, FL 32174; 386-673-8900; Fax: 386-673-8080; E-mail: info@broadway-limited.com; www.broadway-limited.com



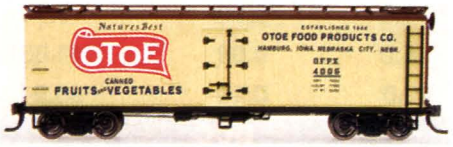
Triple unit diner cars bring "buzz" to layouts

New SD40T-2s & reefers also available

N — Intermountain has released three SD40T-2 locomotives, a wood reefer car, and two triple unit diner cars.

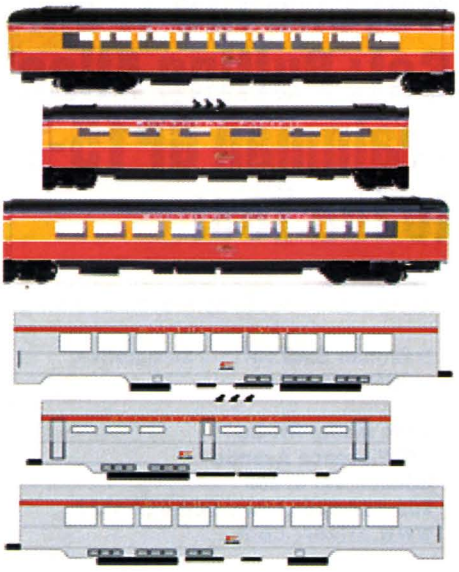
Three SD40T-2 locomotives are now

available. Southern Pacific (#69403) is decorated in the Speed Lettering scheme, and is available for roadnumbers 8237, 8268, 8276, and 8294. Union Pacific (#69424) is numbered and lettered for the UP but retains many of the D&RGW markings from its previous service. "Rio Grande" is in large yellow letters on the side of the black body; while UP red and yellow, along with the shield, appear under the cab windows, the UP shield is also on the nose. It is available for numbers 7877, 8608, 8612, and 8622. Union Pacific Patch (#69425) is numbered and lettered for the UP, but still bears many of the SP markings from its previous service. "Southern Pacific" is in large white letters on the side of the gray body; while UP red and yellow, along with the shield, appear under the cab windows, the UP shield is also on the nose. It is available for numbers 8794, 8822, 8828, and 8867. According to Intermountain, the models feature prototypically correct details including the fuel tank, the air conditioner, and the horns. They have finely molded details, etched metal details, and are equipped with Micro-Trains couplers. The locomotives are DCC-ready, and retail for $119.95 each. Samples of the UP patch models were not available for photography at press time.



A new wood reefer is available for Otoe Food Products Company (#67723). This refrigerator car is decorated with the red and white Otoe banner on a cream-colored car side. The ends and roofs are freight car brown. The model is equipped with finely molded details and Micro-Trains trucks and couplers. It is available for roadnumbers 4001, 4002, 4005, 4006, 4008, and 4010. The suggested retail price is $19.95.

Two triple-unit dinner cars have been released. Southern Pacific (#CCS7000) was originally built for the *Shasta Daylight*. Southern Pacific had two of these sets, each containing a coffee shop, kitchen, and dining car. The set is painted red and orange



Daylight colors with black roofs and underframes. It is available for two sets of roadnumbers. The first set is 10262, 10263, and 10264, the second set is 10265, 10266, and 10267. Southern Pacific (#CCS7001) is painted in the *Sunset* scheme of silver with the scarlet letter boards. The lettering is lettering gray. The set includes a coffee shop, kitchen, and dining car. It is available for roadnumbers 10265, 10266, and 10267. The sets retail for $119.95 each.

Intermountain Railway Co., P.O. Box 839, Longmont, CO 80502-0839; 303-772-1901; Fax: 303-772-8534; E-mail: intermountain@intermountain-railway.com; www.intermountain-railway.com

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REVIEW N

Beyond the Train Set: Putting Atlas' Trainman GP15-1 to the Test

Review and Photos by Steven Goehring

Trainman EMD GP15-1 locomotive, MSRP: $79.95

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By-The-Numbers

EMD GP15-1
Atlas
N 1:160 • Type: Diesel
Traction Tires? No

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷ Loco Wt	= Efficiency
0.58	2.43	23.87%
Volts	Amps	
10	0.13	

Analog DC

Start Volts = 1.5

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
1.5	0.03	0.14
6.0	0.08	40.85
10.0	0.10	95.91

DCC

Stall Amps 0.24

Speed	Step (of 128)	Scale MPH
Min	17	1.95
Mid	63	52.52
Top	126	137.87

ATLAS MODEL RR CO. has released a second run of N-scale GP15-1 locomotives under their Trainman product line. The latest run features two roadnames each for Burlington Northern, California Northern, Chicago & North Western, Frisco, and Norfolk Southern. This builds off of the previous run, which included Conrail, CSX, Missouri Pacific, and Union Pacific. Each GP15-1 features directional lighting, blackened wheels, a 5-pole motor, low-friction mechanism, and Accumate couplers. The locomotive is DCC-ready and can accept decoders including the NCE N12A2, the TCS ASD-4, and the Digitrax DN163A2.

I have found the GP15-1 to be a successful and reliable locomotive, yet there are a variety of reasons why modelers may question whether or not it is up to par with the high quality of today's N-scale locomotive market. The GP15-1 has been available for a little over a year now, and I have both a first-run and second-run locomotive available for testing. I'm hoping to address the locomotive acknowledging its origin as a lower-cost train set engine, but evaluating it as an independent locomotive. It stands well as a product and is a welcome and worthy entry into the N-scale diesel market.

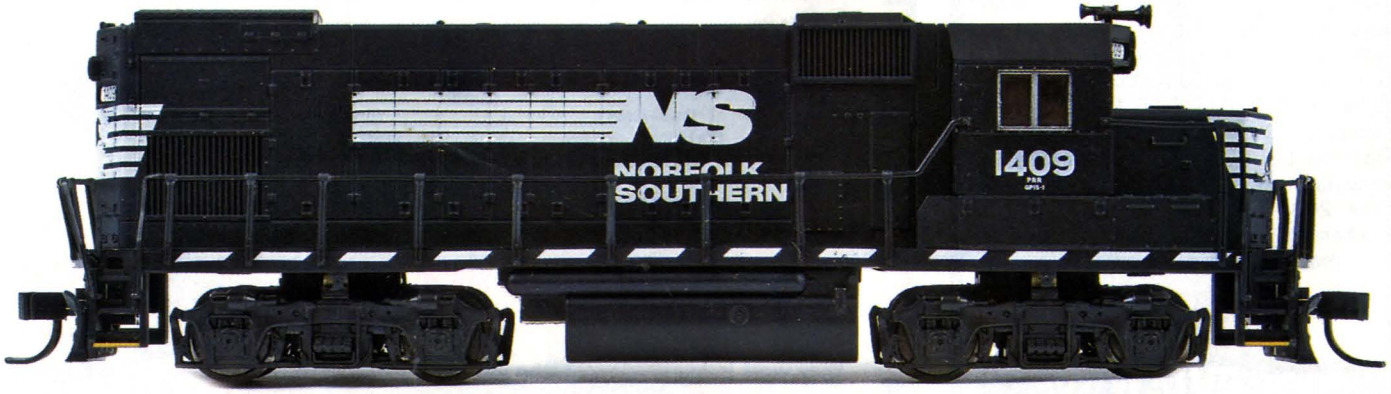
EMD's Lower-Cost Rebuild Locomotive

The 1970s were not the kindest of years for the railroads. Fuel crises and more truck competition continued to pressure them. A few small strokes of legislation and market changes started them on the path to recovery, though, and one such contribution was the GM Electro-Motive Division GP15 program.

A change in regulations allowed railroads to treat a "major rebuild" as a "new locomotive," saving costs and allowing them to acquire "new" locomotives for lower costs. Railroads began their own major rebuild programs around this time, and General Motors wanted in on the market. They offered to take back an aging GP-series locomotive, like a GP7 or GP9, and rebuild it into a like-new locomotive while reusing components like trucks and electrical equipment. EMD installed a new 12-cylinder 645E diesel motor to produce a 1,500 horsepower locomotive. The first was built in June of 1976 and the last was finished in March of 1982, with 310 units built.

Several railroads began ordering GP15s to match their needs. There were four major buyers of GP15-1 locomotives: the Missouri Pacific, with 160; Conrail, with 100; the Chicago & Northwestern, with 25; and the Frisco, also with 25. The GP15T was another model built for other railroads, but it differed from the GP15-1 in several ways.

Each railroad's GP15s differed in details in some minor way. C&NW had a very obvious round nose gong set back into their nose. Conrail's units sported the Pennsylvania Railroad-style cab signal box ahead of the cab on the engineer's side. MoPac had ladders on the long hood and some units had different trucks or nose lengths.



Here's a look at both sides of this pretty pony. The model is well done in all ways. It is only available in one basic body style, though, so it leaves any of the road-specific options and details up to the modeler to add.

Atlas' Take On The GP15-1

Having worked in a hobby shop, I've personally seen how people shop for trains. The simplicity of an all-in-one train set appeals to people who are new to model railroading, not to mention the price savings. However, a cheap set with bad equipment won't last, and an expensive set with premium equipment won't sell, not to the average train set customer base. But sets that strike a good balance sell fast, especially around the holidays.

Atlas sought to address this exact market niche when they introduced the Trainman GP15-1 Train Sets in 2008. They developed an entirely new locomotive for the set, but made it with two major changes to reduce the cost: it must have fewer parts for easier, cheaper assembly, and it must only have one body version, to reduce up-front development costs and costs for each model. The end result cut the price for the new engine by about $25.00, compared to similar Atlas engines of the time. This lower-priced locomotive, paired with Trainman freight cars and True-Track, allowed Atlas to sell excellent-quality trains sets for $150.00. I know I recommended them wholeheartedly to customers in the shop. So how did Atlas' compromises affect the GP15-1 as a product? Simply put, you can ignore any differences in this locomotive, as you'll likely not find it any less reliable or accurate than Atlas' other N-scale offerings.

The major changes to the locomotive's drive mechanism are only omitting the brass contact strips that gather power off the trucks. Instead, the truck contacts extend up and rub against the metal frame halves, relaying power through the light board or decoder and into the motor. Also, the locomotive lacks a plastic fuel tank. Instead, it has a metal tank cast into the frame, which is painted and detailed nicely. On the inside, this metal tank contains an extra frame spacer to prevent the sides from coming together and causing a short circuit. You may want to glue that and the clear plastic tabs under the motor bracket in place, lest you lose them when you open the locomotive! Other than those, though, the GP15-1 contains the same mechanism as you'll find inside any of Atlas' other quality locomotives.

On the outside, the GP15-1 is nicely detailed to match the prototype. However, you should note that it matches the prototype in general; many railroads added details and modifications that are not included on the one body style that Atlas offers. The GP15-1 model is accurately scaled and all of its major dimensions were either right on or within scale inches of the prototype. The body is well molded and shows impressive depth of detail, particularly in the rooftop vents on the rear end. Paint is well-applied, even, opaque, and crisp. It's accurate, too, with all lettering and logos located quite precisely to match the real Norfolk Southern 1409. A variety of warning labels and minor paint details are missing, but if your model legal department really wants "WARNING: 600 VOLTS" stamped on all your locomotives in ultra-fine print, then buy a Master Line engine. Personally, I fired my N-scale legal department years ago, and couldn't care less about the paint detail omissions.

The quality of detail on this locomotive is quite impressive. The plows and pilots are nicely detailed, especially for the price tag of this piece. The rooftop grilles are particularly well done.

Painting on the model is very nicely done, and you'll find the graphics and logos quite correct. The tiny warning labels were cut to keep the price of this Trainman locomotive down, but those of us not toting magnifiers won't miss them.

The locomotive matches NMRA standards for wheel gauge, clearances, and coupler height, all measured against current NMRA and Micro-Trains tools.

So How's It Run?

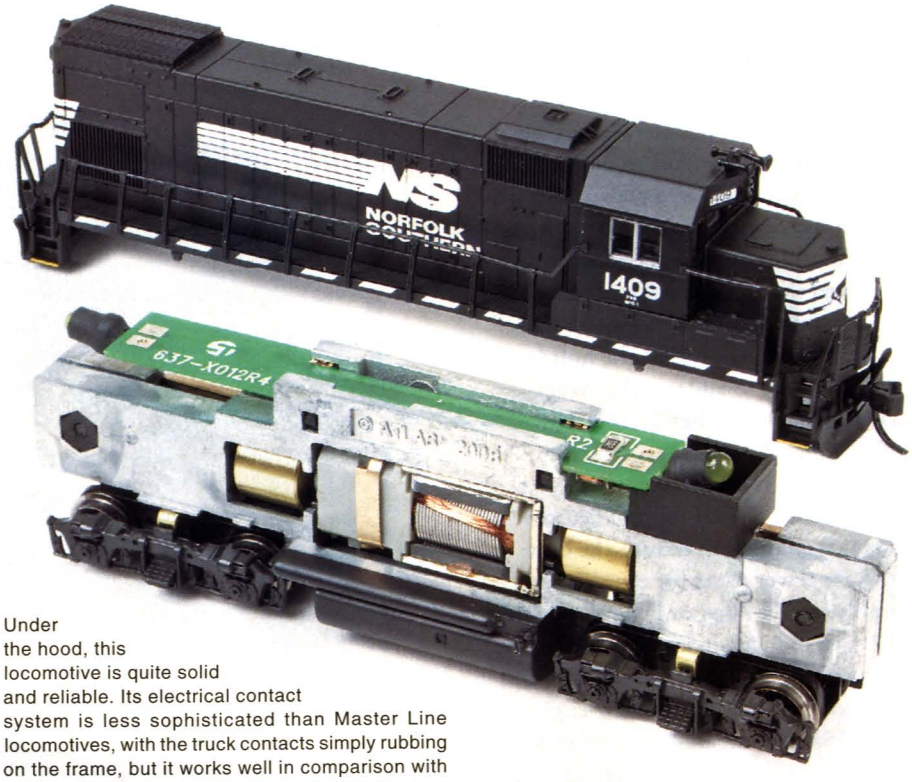
The GP15-1 is a very nice runner and is certainly comparable to the more expensive Atlas locomotives. It features nice golden-toned LED headlights and is quite the smooth runner. It's also nice

and quiet, and moves at very reasonable speeds under DC, easily maintaining slow speeds that the switching-service GP15s were built for.

I received an older first-run GP15-1 several months ago and have run it extensively under both conventional DC control and Digital Command Control. I found its electrical pickup to be on par with the average for 4-axle diesel locomotives. It ran smoother than most and held lower speeds easily. Automatic uncoupling with magnets worked quite well, also.

Converting the locomotive to digital control was easy and yielded nice results. I used NCE's N12A2 decoder, which is a simple, reliable decoder. It offers two functions and a great variety of lighting effects, although it lacks the Back EMF (electro-magnetic force) pulse control that allows the motor to run at very low speeds. Thus you will notice that the locomotive does not start up at as low a speed, nor maintain as low a speed as you can get with a steady hand on a solid DC power pack. A variety of Back EMF decoders are available for smoother control, and while NCE would benefit from implementing pulse motor control in the N12A2, it remains a worthy product.

Installation was simple, but it also had an added step to make the end results even more reliable. The GP15-1's factory-installed circuit board has four clips on the contact points between the frame halves and the board. These make for a tighter fit and more reliable electrical contact. Since the openings where the frame contacts the light board are larger to accommodate the clips, you will need to remove them from the light board and slide them onto the decoder. I tightened them by hand and slid them onto the contact pads from the side (moving them long-ways from the center of the board).



Under the hood, this locomotive is quite solid and reliable. Its electrical contact system is less sophisticated than Master Line locomotives, with the truck contacts simply rubbing on the frame, but it works well in comparison with most of today's 4-axle diesel models. The light board can be replaced with the same decoders made for Atlas' GP7, GP9, GP30, or GP35.

Conclusion

So how does the GP15-1 size up as a locomotive in the 2009 N-scale market? Very well, thank you very much. The lower price makes it more attractive to customers, and it really hasn't given up any quality to achieve that price. I'll be running my two Atlas Trainman GP15-1s for a long time, and advise you to join me. Make like a '70s railroad and get yourself one of these lower-priced yet good-quality locomotives today!

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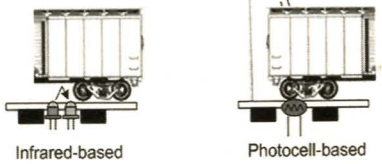

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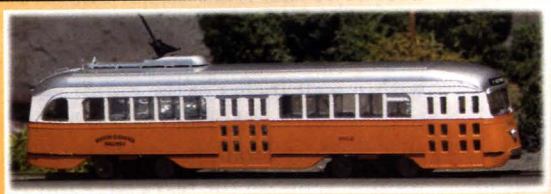

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Bluford releases new boxcar trio of 86-foot Autoparts boxcars

N — Bluford Shops has released a new trio of Autoparts boxcar runs. The cars have injection molded plastic bodies, etched metal details, operating knuckle couplers, and accurately appearing trucks and cushion draft gear enclosures. The suggested retail price is $24.95 for single cars, and $49.90 for 2-packs.

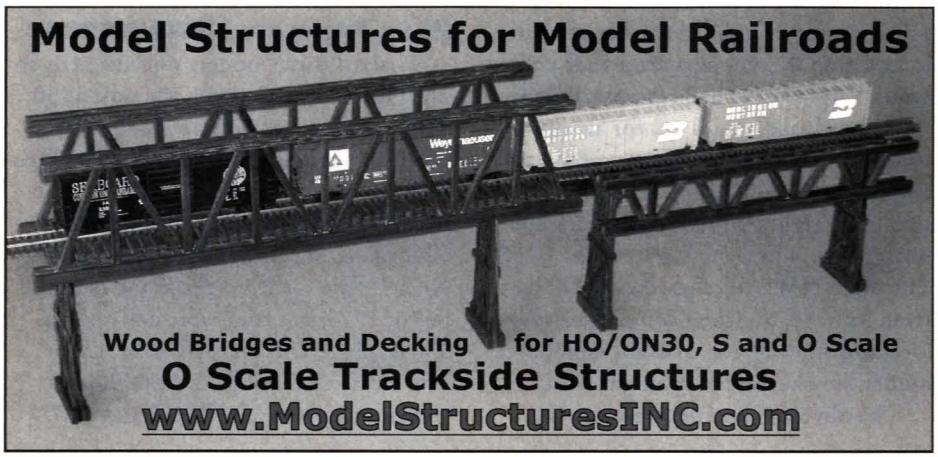
Detroit Toledo & Ironton (#86231) is a double door single car and is painted magenta, and is also available as a 2-pack (#86232). DT&I had a large fleet of 86-foot auto parts cars and in a variety of paint schemes. In addition to variations of Sky Blue and Cypress Green, DT&I had these Magenta cars. This particular group was built by Penn Central in their shops for the DT&I. DT&I was owned by a PC holding company at the time.

Penn Central (#87071) is a quad door single car, and is available as a 2-pack (#87072). Penn Central inherited their quad door car fleet from both New York Central and Pennsylvania. The combined PC fleet of 86-foot boxcars was the largest in the nation, with Conrail inheriting the title after 1976. This group was assigned for loading at a Chevy plant in Flint, Michigan on the Grand Trunk Western for delivery to Chevy assembly lines across the country.

The Missouri Pacific model (#87081) is

a quad door single car, and is painted in the "Screaming Eagle" scheme. The boxcar is also available as a 2-pack (#87082). Missouri Pacific purchased 86-foot boxcars under the auspices of MP, Texas & Pacific, and Kansas Oklahoma & Gulf subsidiaries, plus inheriting some from Chicago & Eastern Illinois. In the late 70s, as the Screaming Eagle logo began to supplant the old buzzsaw, MP was already changing the reporting marks of these subsidiary cars to MP. This paint scheme was being applied by the MoPac right up to the acquisition by Union Pacific in 1983.

Bluford Shops, P.O. Box 152, Bluford, IL 62814; Phone/Fax: 618-822-6833; E-mail: blufordshops@aol.com; www.bluford-shops.com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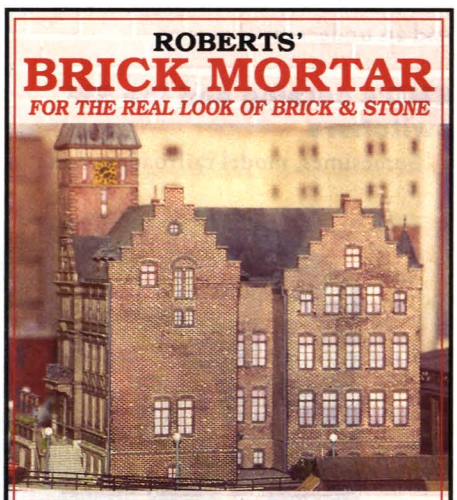
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REVIEW HO

SW7/9 a real winner in BLI's Paragon 2 Line

Review and Photos by John Sipple

SW7/9 Diesel Locomotive, BLI 2030 - 2038, MSRP $199.99

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THE ROADS that initially purchased the SW7 Phase II, SW9, and SW1200 make an almost impossible list, since nearly every railroad had one or more. Over 2,300 were erected, making this series a sales bonanza. By the time they got into secondhand usage, these 1,200 hp switchers were virtually ubiquitous. BLI's initial offerings are limited but significant: New York Central, Union Pacific, Nickel Plate, Pennsy, Texas & Pacific, Illinois Central, and an undecorated version.

EMD's catalog and the SW switchers

Sometimes, model railroaders don't see a particular brand and model of a locomotive the way the manufacturer or the receiving railroad might. So while the veritable NW2 sold over a thousand copies in the decade it was in production from 1939, it was time for a new switcher line after the war. So when a railroad called on EMD for an end-cab switcher, both buyer and seller looked at the current catalog. The new switcher wasn't that different from the one first shown to the public in 1939.

Product model names didn't mean a whole lot to either end of the deal; the difference between an NW2 and an SW7 didn't look like much, when viewed from the outside. You could say the NW2 had arched windows in the front of the cab while the SW7 squared them off, but that wouldn't be exactly correct. Early SW7s had the arched windows, but crews didn't do much with the extra window space, so GM trimmed them off at the top. They did it when they did it, and all SW switchers after that point around April 1950 had square windows.

As a railroad, you'd ask for an end cab switcher. They'd ask if you wanted a 567 engine in either a V-8 or V-12 configuration. The eight cylinder cooked up 800 horsepower while the V-12 posted 1,200. The older NW2 developed 1,000 horses from its V-12. So when you picked your loco and your engine, you got whichever model they were making at the time.

The obvious spotting sign was the stack arrangement. The SW8 and SW900 had a V-8 and only one stack; the SW7, SW9, and SW1200 had two stacks to support the larger V-12 engine.

Many a railroad ordered an SW7 and was delivered an SW9, and no one really cared. For all intents and purposes, it was the same locomotive with some improvements, most of which couldn't be seen on the outside. However, in the transition from the SW7 to SW9, the louvers on the sides of the hood went from two rows of seven columns in the SW7 to eight columns of just the lower row for the SW9 and SW1200. Beyond that and louvers on the battery box, there was no outward difference from one model to the next until the end of the 567 engine in 1966. With the advent of the 645 prime mover, there were inevitable changes in the outward appearance, as well.

BLI's Paragon 2 SW7/9/1200

I list all three models since there is so little difference between the post-1950 SW7 and her later sisters model makers can justifiably use one mold for all three. We have two samples: Nickel Plate 236 and Pennsylvania 9394. The New York, Chicago & St. Louis, also known as the Nickel Plate, ordered three SW7s in the fall of 1950, but they were delivered as SW9s 230 – 232. In early 1951, they ordered five more of the 1,200 horse version, this time as SW9s 233 – 237,

I appreciate the figures in the cab, but what I'd really like is for the engineer to face the right side of the cab on his swivel seat, a position that lets him operate the loco while looking both forward and back.

Note some differences between each version: The cab number above the right rear window on the Pennsy becomes just a hand grab on the NKP. The headlights are appropriately different, too.

making our sample an SW9. NY, C&StL added another order of seven more SW9s in mid-1952. They also purchased eight of the SW8 model about that same time.

Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania Railroad bought lots and lots of end cab switchers from EMD. They took home everything from SW1s to SW1200, and in all that was an order for 17, numbered into the roster as 9373 to 9395. Purchased in early 1950, they were SW7s with squared front windows and double rows of side vents.

So right away we have a proto-issue. While the Pennsy version is correct with the double side rows, the Nickel Plate version is not, but this is a small issue. The battery boxes both have six louvers, correct for the SW7 and SW9, going to five on the SW1200.

I hadn't looked at the SW7/9 model from BLI before the Paragon 2 issue, so I was in for a surprise. Everything from basic molding to paint application to lettering and decoration to details is excellent. I found interesting the contrast between the Nickel Plate's true black car body and the Pennsy dark locomotive green. The formula for this was a 40 gallon barrel of black paint with about ten pounds of powdered copper. The greenishness of this concoction could be seen in bright daylight and less so as the light faded. BLI's interpretation of this color paint is remarkably good.

When the model is laid on its side atop a published HO-scale drawing of this type of loco, it matches up close enough to perfect that there's really nothing more to say on that topic. From the SC model of 1936 until the end of the SW1200 in 1966, the dimensions of these basic switchers remained very similar for 30 years. A few of the later copies were ordered with Flexicoil road trucks, but none of those are being modeled by BLI at this time. There wasn't enough room under the loco for Blomberg B trucks and a fuel tank at the same time.

Operation

Most SW7 and SW9 locomotives were not equipped with MU capability and so worked alone. Some railroads added this ability later, but most went from delivery to scrap without them. Neither of our samples has MU equipment so they're just right. However, if BLI was to produce a cabless "B" version, you could put the A and B together to make a "Cow And Calf" arrangement. The TR4 is basically the SW7 version while the SW9 TRansfer set would be the TR5.

While it is doubtful these two ever worked together in real life, they did just fine on my layout. Most of my explorations of their operational properties came in individual tests. We need to understand, right out of the chute, that any switcher running on AAR Type A trucks was a very risky business much over thirty miles per hour. The Type A was inexpensive to build, install, and maintain, but they lacked the sway control found in the more expensive (and longer) Type B, Blomberg B, and Flexicoil B trucks. Most switchers had speed governors and lived running up and down the same yard tracks all day, every day, rarely going faster than the yard speed limits of 5, 10, or 15 miles per hour. With that in mind, the top speed on these model locomotives is 33 scale miles per hour.

DC operation is scaled from a little over 8 volts to 16, a range of about 8 volts, pretty good as DC/DCC/Sound decoders go. The operating characteristics range from very slow up to about the same top speed of 33. Really, there are straight DC locos on the market that have starting threshholds around eight volts, so you can really work with this model in DC.

The other thing that you notice right away on operation is that there is a fair amount of included momentum. In DCC, CV's 3 and 4 are set to 5 but can be dialed back to 0 if you wish. Perhaps the most amazing thing about this decoder is ... everything! We've watched the genesis of Broadway Limited Imports from employing technology made by other people and then to the Blueline where they supplied the sound but you provided the motor decoder. Now, they have a complete sound decoder strategy and a very good one, so far.

Sound control is excellent, allowing you to tailor various sounds as you wish, and they offer multiple horns. Horn 0 is the default, Horn 1 is a multi-chime, not appropriate on either of these roads, but Horn 2 is a very plain "blatt" horn that I instantly adopted. I then set the CV on to automatically sound the direction calls of the horn — you know, two medium toots forward, three shorts in reverse, and a short when the brakes are

By-The-Numbers

SW7/9 Pennsy

Broadway Limited Imports, LLC

HO 1:87 • Type: Diesel

Traction Tires? No

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷	Loco Wt	=	Efficiency
1.4		9.2		15.2%

Volts	Amps
16	0.22

Analog DC

Start Volts = 8.4

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
8.4	0.1	0.3
13.0	0.12	26.0
16.0	0.16	33.0

DCC

Speed	Step (of 99%)	Scale MPH
Min	1%	0.5
Mid	50%	8.5
Top	99%	33.0

By-The-Numbers

SW7/9 Nickel Plate

Broadway Limited Imports, LLC

HO 1:87 • Type: Diesel

Traction Tires? No

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷	Loco Wt	=	Efficiency
1.4		9.2		15.2%

Volts	Amps
16	0.23

Analog DC

Start Volts = 8.2

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
8.2	0.1	0.4
13.0	0.12	26.0
16.0	0.15	33.0

DCC

Speed	Step (of 99%)	Scale MPH
Min	1%	0.5
Mid	50%	9.5
Top	99%	33

Notice that the letters "Nickel Plate" run between an upper and lower set of louvers, something that only happened on an SW7. No. 236 was, however, an SW9. Oh well. Now enjoy the rest of the model, with loads of separately applied goodies.

In the glare of the high-power strobes, Pennsy 9394 seems to be a greenish gray. In normal room light, it dims down to a greenish black. I just love it when I get a couple of locos with straight handrails. Also note the single "blatt" horn; set CV124=2 and that's what you'll have.

set on stopping. You'd think an FRA inspector was hanging around the way that hogger stayed on the horn handle. I found I liked this feature very much.

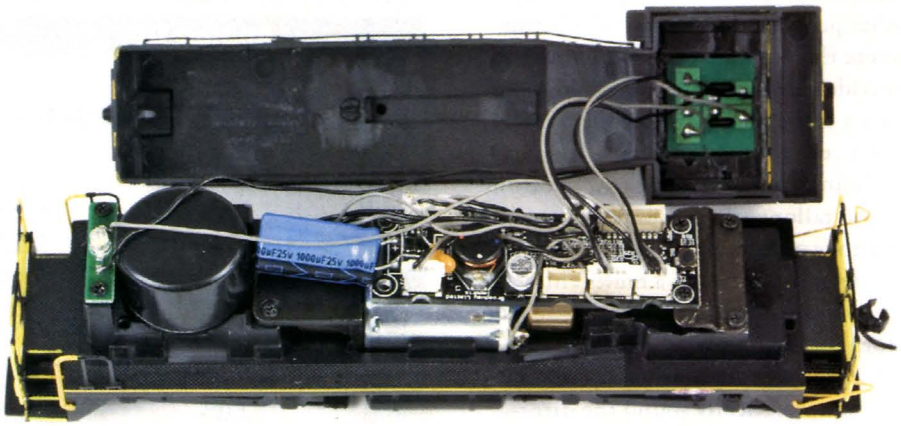
The only sound setting I felt I couldn't ignore was volume. This loco is LOUD. I cut the volume in half and liked it better, but the train room is less than 14 by 18. The extra volume might go over well in a large clubroom or a train show. I tinkered with other sounds and sound levels and ended up with a very sweet pair of switchers.

I also reworked the motor controls some. I wasn't touching CV2, which starts at less than a half-scale mile per hour and is just dead steady. I've had other pullers that would start under one but would then lurch, a sign of problems in the drive system. The BLI drive with the sound off is quiet and smooth. I decided I wanted the halfway mark to be 15 scales miles per hour, perhaps the top yard speed most places, and so I did it "live," programming on the main while set at 50 percent throttle. It dialed right in at CV6 = 70.

The modern NMRA convention for functions gives us as many as 29, 0 – 28. We have the Blueline standard F9 to start up the sound, which includes cranking up the prime mover, if you're patient enough to go through it. With the prototype, you didn't have a choice. We've got all the bells, whistles, and lights, but then we have some bonuses. Over the years, we've seen plans to give sound to a layout that would somehow follow a locomotive around, providing higher fidelity without loco conversion. This is just the opposite; these locos have good fidelity based upon their size, and they add environmental sounds to the engine audio.

F14 provides the familiar, "All-l-l Aboard, all aboard," passenger announcement, F15 is a Freight Announcement, F16 gives Maintenance Sounds, F17 is Radio Sounds, F18 offers City Background, F19 Farm Background, F20 plays Industrial, and F21 is Lumber. F25 is a rule 17 Dimmer but F26 and 27 provide a real surprise. If you're familiar with the computer concept of the macro, you'll be onto this in a flash. Press F27 to start recording a sequence of key presses and press F27 again to stop recording. Then press F26 and the keypresses you recorded will be replayed in that sequence. You can also completely rearrange the function keys through programming, assigning to each key whatever functions you wish.

Best of all, BLI includes a pretty comprehensive manual for both DC and DCC operation. JMRI's "Decoder Pro" version 2.5.3 includes a definition for the Paragon 2 decoders, but be aware that you may have to work this through Programming On the Main. As with most sound decoders, working on a program track can be frustrating.



Pop off the shell and you'll find no user-serviceable parts inside. Considering how tight the installation is and what this loco does for you, this is pretty tidy and efficient. The gear drive doesn't have towers, so I'm begging BLI to produce an SW1, my favorite EMD switcher!

And in the end...

We've seen the Paragon 2 decoder in the AC6000 and large steamers, but this is its debut into a small loco. Looking at the inside layout, BLI has left sufficient room to create a baffle for larger sound, and this decoder can really crank it out! While the merged technology of great sound with a Back EMF motor controller is certainly welcome and fun, this all relies upon the solid, basic model. With good operating characteristics and attractive modeling, paint, and decoration, this is a locomotive to enjoy for a long time to come.

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New G74 baggage car adds room to passenger cars

HO — Intermountain has released an EMD F7A and F7B locomotive in new roadnumbers, four new EMD FP7s, six 40-foot PS-1 boxcars, three ACF center flow two-bay hoppers, a G74 baggage car, a class PBm coach, and a Tichy USRA single sheathed boxcar.

An EMD F7A and F7B locomotive is now available in new roadnumbers for Milwaukee Road (#49075 & #490575). The models are painted in the 1952 scheme of orange and black with a wide maroon stripe. Each model comes fully assembled with wire handrails, etched metal grilles, cab interior, and Kadee couplers. The drive is available either as DCC-ready with the 8-pin NMRA compatible plug, or with the QSI sound system installed that will work on DC or DCC powered track. The A-unit is available in roadnumbers 50-A, 110-C, 111-A, and 114-C, and it retails for $99.95 without sound or $169.95 with sound. The B-unit is available for numbers 50B, 84B, 110B, and 111B, and it retails for $94.95 without sound or $164.95 with sound.

Four new EMD FP7s have been released. Seaboard Coast Line (#49959) is black with a thin yellow line down the sides and a wide yellow band at the bottom. The lettering is in silver and the number boards are white with black numbers. It is available for roadnumbers 318, 325, and 331. Rock Island (#49960) is painted maroon with a yellow nose. The lettering is all white. It is available for numbers 402, 403, and 409. Ferrocarriles Nacionales De Mexico (#49961) is painted with a dark green body and a red nose. The shield on the nose is yellow, and the lettering is silver. It is available for roadnumbers 6300, 6302, 6303, and 6305. Ontario Northland (#49962) is painted in yellow, and two shades of blue. The lettering is in the darker blue color. It is available for numbers 1509, 1510, and 1517. Each model comes fully assembled with wire handrails, etched metal grilles, cab interior, and Kadee couplers. The drive is DCC-ready with the 8-pin NMRA compatible plug, or the QSI sound system installed that will work on DC or DCC powered track. The suggested retail price without sound is $129.95, or $199.95 with sound.

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leased. Delaware & Hudson (#45404) is decorated in boxcar red with white lettering. It is available for roadnumbers 18907, 19036, 19082, 19165, 19278, and 19394. Nashville Chattanooga (#45411) is painted light boxcar red with a wide yellow band down the side. It is available for numbers 22074, 22137, 22291, 22309, 22426, and 22585. D&RGW (#45412) is painted boxcar red with white lettering. Available 50296, 50327, 50358, 50373, 50455, and 50484. Chicago Great Western (#45413) is brown with white lettering and carries the "Corn Belt Route" herald on the right of the car sides. It is numbered for 93008, 93152, 93245, 93319, 93427, and 93500. Southern (#45414) is painted brown with white lettering. The "O" in the large "Southern" on the left of the car side is filled in with green. It is available for roadnumbers 504167, 504212, 504483, 504697, 504735, and 504856. Cotton Belt (#45456) is painted brown with white lettering. The paint-out on the data on the left of the car side is orange. The lightning bolt in the Cotton Belt herald is blue. It is available for numbers 35184, 35238, 35396, 35427, 35512, and 35549. Each car comes fully assembled with metal wheelsets and Kadee couplers. They retail for $29.95.

Three ACF center flow two-bay hoppers have been released in new roadnumbers. MKT (#46502) is painted dark green with yellow lettering, and is available for numbers 407, 423, 439, 452, 474, and 491. Southern Pacific (#46511) is painted gray with black lettering, and is available for numbers 490106, 490239, 490278, 490345, 490353, and 490497. Norfolk Southern (#46529) is painted with a gray body, and black logo and lettering. It is available for roadnumbers 233000, 233009, 233026, 233035, 233037,

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and 233042. The hoppers are fully equipped with etched metal roofwalks, metal wheelsets, and Kadee couplers. They retail for $31.95.

A new G74 baggage car is now available for New York Central (#BCW5241), has etched brass sides and doors, with plastic clerestory roof ends. The model is painted green with a black roof and underframe. The lettering is yellow. The car is equipped with wire grab irons, metal wheelsets, and Kadee couplers. It is available for roadnumbers 7508, 7957, 8246, and 8579. It retails for $59.95.

A class PBm coach has released for Central Railroad of New Jersey (#BCW5310) with new roadnumbers. It is painted coach green with a black roof and underframe. The lettering is yellow. The car is equipped with grab irons, metal wheelsets, and Kadee couplers. The roadnumbers are 999, 1026, and 1152. The coach retails for $59.95.

A new Tichy USRA single sheathed boxcar (#T452606) is freight car red with white lettering. It is fully equipped with metal wheelsets and Kadee couplers. It is available for roadnumbers 700527, 700805, 703471, and 703869. It retails $32.95.

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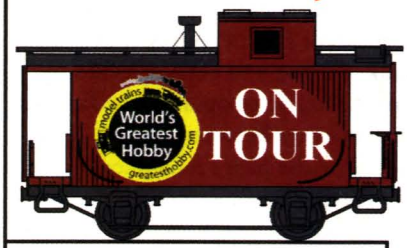

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REVIEW HO

The Hiawatha's Yellows and Grays

***Walthers' Milwaukee Road* Hiawatha Fleet Gets a New Coat of Paint and Details to Boot**

Review and Photos by David Otte

Railway Post Office No. 2152-53 (#932-9211), MSRP: $54.98
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By-The-Numbers

EMD E7A - 18A
Proto 2000
HO 1:87 • Type: Diesel
Traction Tires? No

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷	Loco Wt	=	Efficiency
5.1		19.1		26.7%

Volts	Amps
16	0.4

Analog DC

Start Volts = 12

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
12.0	0.17	1
13.5	0.19	15
16.0	0.30	45

DCC

Stall Amps (if applicable)

Speed	Step (of 128)	Scale MPH
Min	1	1
Mid	63	42
Top	126	90

HAVE you ever had one of those "hobby shop moments" when a product that you never intended to buy leaps off the store shelf at you upon first sight and instantly becomes a must-have? That's a situation I recently experienced when encountering Walthers' Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific-themed passenger equipment. I've never really been a Milwaukee Road fan, per se, so I didn't take much notice of the company's 75th Anniversary announcement back in 2007 of their *Twin Cities Hiawatha* train and associated structures. However, after reading the positive reviews by my fellow hobby journalists here on the pages of *Model Railroad News* and seeing the full maroon-and-orange-painted passenger consist along with that grand depot, car shelter, and other road-specific lineside buildings firsthand at my local train store, well, the models just took hold of my senses and didn't let go. I left that day a member of the *Hiawatha* Tribe!

That's why I jumped at the chance to share my comments with you regarding Walthers' recent release of the yellow-and-gray *Twin Cities Hiawatha* train set. While at first glance it may appear that only the colors have changed, in reality there is a whole host of new details that continue telling the story of this prototype in its later years of service.

Hiawathas in Transition

1955 was certainly a pivotal year for the CMSt.P&P Railroad in regard to its passenger train operations. In September of that year came the surprise announcement from company president John P. Kiley that the Milwaukee Road had been selected by the Union Pacific to operate the famous *City* streamliners between Omaha and Chicago. For the past seven decades, the connecting service to Chicago had been handled by the Chicago & North Western, but their increasing schedule delays (no doubt due to the deferred track maintenance practiced by that road during lean years) irritated UP management enough to break with tradition. The Milwaukee Road officially took over the *City* trains on October 30 after hiring some 300 new employees to handle the increase passenger traffic and pledging some 44 passenger cars to the service, all to be painted in the UP's Armour Yellow and Harbor Mist Gray scheme.

Despite expressions of mixed feelings over this arrangement from others in the company, Kiley believed that being associated with such important transcontinental trains as the *City of Denver*, *City of Los Angles*, *City of San Francisco*, the *City of Portland*, and the Chicago to Los Angeles *Challenger* was very good for business, offering the railroad valuable advertising of its quality passenger service and freight business. Unfortunately, they never saw much new freight revenue from this relationship as most of it stayed with C&NW, and it wasn't too long after the deal that passenger trains began to see serious declines in ridership. However, there was one lasting effect from the relationship between the two railroads that changed forever the appearance of the famous *Hiawatha* trains. It was determined in early 1956 that the UP color scheme was much more durable and easier to maintain then the old maroon and orange colors and the yellow and gray scheme was

The Yellow and Gray E7s certainly live up to their Proto 2000 heritage as they feature a whole host of separately applied road- and era-specific detail parts. First of all, the modeler will need to assemble the body shell to the chassis, which is pretty much just a snap fit. Next, install the pilot with appropriate coupler opening and buffer and then place the coupler cut bar on the rear of the locomotive; the models are complete in a matter of minutes. The quality of part assembly and paint application on our samples was first rate as evident in this photo of number 18A. Visible here are the add-on deflector shields on the nose and in front of the air horns, the rooftop cooling coil and modified radiator grilles, the etched metal spark arrestors over the engine exhaust ports and steam generator stack, the etched metal grilles over the upper side carbody vents, nose lift rings, hand holds, and wind deflectors on the side windows of the cab.

soon adopted for all passenger equipment with the exception of coaches in suburban service.

The newer passenger equipment was all repainted in short order with the older cars receiving a paint job as time permitted and as they were shopped for maintenance issues. In regard to the Twin Cities trains as represented by the Walthers' HO-scale models, Numbers 5 and 6, the westbound and eastbound *Morning Hiawathas*, and Numbers 2 and 3, the eastbound and westbound *Afternoon Hiawathas*, with their mostly 1947-, 1948-, and 1952-built cars, began appearing as solid UP color consists by mid-1957. The contemporary roster of passenger motive power, such as the E7s, FP7s, E9s, Erie-builts, and the like, all followed suit. Even a few of the Fairbanks Morse H12-44s switchers assigned to the Everett Street Depot in Milwaukee received UP paint. This would be the final paint scheme worn by the passenger fleet right up until Amtrak took over the nation's passenger service.

About the time the new paint scheme was adopted, typical consists for service between Chicago and Minneapolis – St. Paul, as advertised in passenger timetables and recorded by dispatchers, were as follows: The eastbound *Morning Hiawatha* included a Rapid Series Skytop Lounge, Super Dome, 4 to 6 coaches, and a diner, which was added to the train at Milwaukee. The westbound carried a diner as well plus a Tap Lounge and a Valley Series Parlor Car. Both trains carried an express – baggage car and a Railway Post Office. In turn, the eastbound and westbound *Afternoon Hiawathas* included pretty much the same consists, although they usually required 6 to 8 coaches and neither carried RPO cars. The Lightweight coaches appeared to have come from general passenger car pool service, but of varying *Hiawatha* train heritage with build dates ranging from 1934 to 1948. Trains were adjusted based on ridership requirements so the number of coaches and parlor cars required for *Twin Cities* service during a particular season could fluctuate.

Passenger motive power also changed on the *Twin Cities Hiawathas* during the era of the UP City trains venture. Pairs of Electro Motive Division E7 2,000 horsepower cab units were usually on the point during the late 1940s, but were bumped to secondary trains in 1950 on the arrival of 4,500 horsepower A-B-A sets of EMD FP7s. In 1956, EMD's 2,400 horsepower E9 cab and booster units arrived on the road and could be seen pulling both the *Morning* and *Afternoon Hiawathas*. The Milwaukee Road made its final passenger locomotive purchases in 1968 with the coming of five 3,600 horsepower EMD FP45s. It should be noted though, that as early as 1957, the railroad began experimenting with multiple unit combinations of these locomotives based on the requirements of the passenger consist. Therefore, the railfan observer may have seen FP7s MUed with an E7 or an E9 mated with an F7 booster or even an FP45 with an E9 or FP7 in later years.

With passenger patronage on a decline from the mid 1950s on, changes came to the entire roster of *Hiawatha* trains. In early 1957, to economize redundant operations, the number 3 *Afternoon Hiawatha* and number 6 *Morning Hiawatha* were combined with trains number 15 and 16, the *Olympian Hiawatha*, until that train's service to Tacoma was discontinued in the spring of 1961. In 1965, the full-

The motive power for this second edition of the *Twin Cities Hiawatha* series are Proto 2000 DCC/sound equipped E7s. The cab unit duo each feature a flywheel-equipped can motor and all-wheel drive, offering plenty of brawn to pull this smart looking consist. Roadnumbers 18A and 18B were among a group of ten E7s, 16 A & B – 20 A & B, delivered to the CMSt.P&P by EMD in 1946. They would remain in passenger service on the road until being traded in on new EMD six-axle power in 1969. While no longer the predominate power on the *Morning* and *Afternoon Hiawathas* by 1950, a lone E7 could occasionally be seen teamed up with an FP7 cab or F7 booster unit on the Twin Cities – Chicago run or more likely as the single locomotive leading the *Sioux* or *Varsity* throughout the late 1950s and 1960s.

We'll begin our tour of the Walthers' *Hiawatha* consist with the head end equipment, which usually followed the locomotive. The 60-foot RPO cars, numbers 2152 and 2153, were built for service on the *Morning Hiawatha* in 1947. This was followed by an Express car from the 1317 – 1329 series delivered by the Milwaukee Shops in 1947 and an Express car with conductor's room, numbers 1330 – 1336. RPOs were discontinued on trains 5 and 6 in 1967 and the conductor's rooms were removed from the later series Express cars soon after with their extra windows simply plated over. Like all the cars in the Walthers' *Hiawatha* collection, metal hand grabs and decals displaying car names and numbers will need to be applied by the modeler. Furthermore, the consumer will need to install the mail hooks and safety bars on the RPO, the baggage doors on the Express car (both single and double porthole window doors are included), and all three cars have two different style brake wheels from which to choose.

Two each of the coaches and the parlor car are included in this Walthers' offering the primary difference of which involves the use of clasp brakes with notched side sills on half the cars and disc brakes with straight side sills employed on the other half. The 498 Series (top) and the 535 Series (middle) coaches, which usually ran behind the head end cars, have the same window arrangement and seated 52 passengers. However, the former series coaches were equipped with steam ejector air conditioning, noted by the grille on the roof, and the later coaches were equipped with Waukesha air conditioning with its three canister propane carriers mounted beneath the car. The Valley Series parlor car (bottom), numbers 190 – 197 erected in 1948, contained 30 chairs and a five-seat drawing room. Parlor cars were usually coupled behind the diner or Tap Lounge car on the *Twin Cities Hiawathas* and the HO-scale sample shown here exhibits Nystrom trucks with clasp brakes and notched side sills, which is in contrast to the coaches' disc brake equipped trucks and straight skirts. All three car types have optional as-delivered folded drop (pictured here on the top car) or post-December 1962 fixed vestibule steps to be applied by the modeler.

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service dining cars on train numbers 5 and 6 were converted over to a self-service buffeteria-style car. Revenue-generating Flexi-vans and mail storage cars were more frequently seen coupled behind the Skytop Lounges throughout the 1960s. The year 1967 saw the end of parlor car conductors on the *Afternoon Hiawathas* and the removal of the RPOs from the *Morning Hiawathas*. The later trains also saw the replacement of their Skytop Lounges with straight parlor cars in early 1969. Finally, with out-of-pocket losses mounting for all the nation's passenger train railroads, the *Afternoon Hiawathas* were discontinued on January 23, 1970 with the *Morning Hiawathas* still listed in the timetables when Amtrak took over on May 1, 1971.

Walthers' Yellow and Gray *Hiawatha*

As John Sipple covered Walthers' initial release of their *Twin Cities Hiawatha* train extensively in his series of articles featured in the March, May, and July 2008 and January and April 2009 issues of *Model Railroad News*, I'll only recap the more significant aspects of these products here. First of all, the 13 cars comprising this offering all follow their specific prototype's details and dimensions very closely. All passenger cars feature full interiors and underbody detailing, ride on diecast metal trucks utilizing insulated RP25 wheel sets, and are equipped with metal Kadee-compatible Proto-Max diecast metal couplers. The cars come pre-wired from the factory ready for installation of a separately sold lighting kit (Walthers 933-1049 or 933-1084). Each car includes an assortment of metal hand grabs for the consumer to apply using a pin vise with number 80 drill bit and the appropriate Armour Yellow or Harbor Mist Gray paint to match the grab to the body color. Also, a decal sheet with a variety of roadnumbers and names accompanies each car so that the modeler can accurately recreate specific cars used on the *Morning* and *Afternoon Hiawathas*. Last but not least, since all the cars in this series are scale length, Walthers recommends a minimum track radius of 24 inches. Based on our testing though, optimal performance will be best achieved on layouts with minimum 28- to 30-inch radius curves.

What has changed on the latest edition of the Chicago to Twin Cities-bound train, besides the picture-perfect, UP-inspired paint scheme, are some of the details. Starting with the trucks, all the cars continue to use the Nystrom 8-foot wheelbase type, but one each of the two coaches and parlor cars being offered have been outfitted with disc brakes rather than with the clasp-style brake system featured on all the earlier models. As the disc brake system used an inside-truck-mounted brake cylinder, the car skirting did not need to be notched like the outside-frame-mounted, cylinder-clasp-brake-equipped trucks required, a detail that is faithfully replicated on the Walthers models. Therefore, it will be imperative for the modeler to examine prototype photos of the specific coaches and parlor cars they wish to model before applying names and numbers in order to more accurately match the brake system to the car. Moving to the car ends, Walthers has also created the later style diaphragms and lift rings appropriate for the post-1956-era cars. Likewise, the decision by the railroad to begin applying fixed vestibule steps to coaches and parlor cars in December 1962 is also reflected in the HO-scale offerings with both plastic folded and fixed steps boxed with the coaches and parlor cars to be applied at the discretion of the modeler.

While Walthers continues to use their E7 units as motive power for the later *Twin Cities* set, by this era, they were less frequently seen on those trains and more likely at the head of the Madison-to-Chicago trains, the *Sioux* and the *Varsity*. If an E7 was employed on the *Afternoon* or *Morning Hiawathas*, it would usually be teamed up with a FP7 cab or booster, and I have even found photographic evidence of an E7, E9B, and FP7 combo! Nonetheless, the Proto 2000 E7s are very nice models and continue to be equipped with the dependable, responsive, and realistic-sounding QSI Quantum System. It's capable of operating on an analog DC- or DCC-equipped layout so everyone can enjoy the features of this E7 duo. No disappointments were encountered during our test runs; each model had excellent slow-speed operation and plenty of lighting or sound features to manipulate under functions F0 to F12.

Besides our samples, numbered 18A and 18B, wearing well-executed paint jobs, the level of detail was quite striking. Apparently, Walthers has made some changes to the tooling for these Proto 2000 models since the days they were first issued by Life-Like. In particular, I was delighted to find the radiator air intake grilles along the top of the carbody to be separately applied photo-etched metal screens rather than just a molded-in feature as present on the older shells. The company has also made accommodations for the later-style sand filler hatches and the extra square-shaped vents added to the midsection of the Milwaukee Road E7 carsides during the 1950s. Lift rings have been added to the nose too, which 18A and 18B received sometime around 1964 or 1965, although other E7s on the roster received them much earlier.

Additional details not present on the first-edition *Hiawatha* E7s include a deflector shield on the headlight, photo-etched spark arrestors on the prime mover exhaust stacks and on

The 48-seat dining car from the 121 – 126 series was coupled directly behind the dome. Several of the diners were later rebuilt for buffeteria style dining serving during the waning days of passenger train travel on the *Morning Hiawatha*. The 26-seat Tap Lounge cars, numbers 172 and 173, were constructed for the *Afternoon Hiawatha* in 1948 and were usually cut in behind the dining car for parlor car patrons. While the rooftop induction antenna comes factory installed on the Tap Lounge, both cars include optional Milwaukee or Miner style brakewheels for consumer application.

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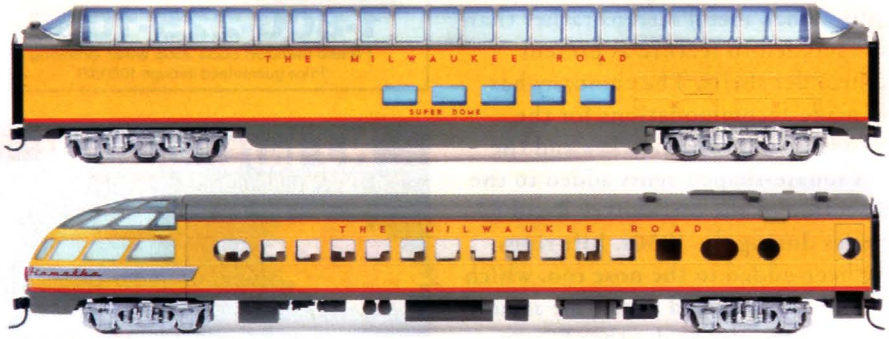
Walthers has captured the Skytop in exacting detail right down to the stainless steel band proclaiming the trains name and the non-functioning rear Mars light.



The 186 – 189 Rapid Series Skytop Lounges were specifically built for the *Twin Cities Hiawathas* in 1948 by the Milwaukee Road Shops. The last of the distinctive parlor – observations to be erected by the CMSt.P&P, the cars featured 24 parlor chairs, a drawing room seating five, and 12 observation section seats offering panoramic viewing through the Skytop area's 27 windows. Probably the second most recognized car involved in *Hiawatha* service were the ten Super Domes 50 – 59 built by Pullman-Standard in 1952. These massive 112 ton cars rode on General Steel Casting 6 wheel trucks, seated 68 passengers on top and had a 28 seat café below, and contained 625 square feet of glass in the dome area requiring a 16 ton air conditioning system to keep it cool — twice the capacity of a conventional car. Walthers has done a great job in reproducing this car as well including the tinted window glazing. Survivors of each of these famous *Hiawatha* service cars are still in use today with the Friends of the 261 currently operating restored examples of each behind their famous Milwaukee Road Northern class steamer.

the steam generator stack, and a narrow footboard added to the engineer's side of the cab nose with which the crew could access and clean the windshield. However, this later item is not quite shaped like the prototype's nor positioned above the sand filler hatch as they were on the CMSt.P&P E7s. Another characteristic of these models that may come into play depending on the era you're modeling involves the as-delivered shuttered panels located just behind the cab doors which appear to have been replaced on the prototype E7s with smooth panels around 1959.

Finally, as the body shell and chassis are carefully packed separately in their box for the modeler to snap together, the proud owner of these *Hiawatha* engines will still need to assemble the pilot choosing the D-shaped coupler opening for this era E7, inserting the extended buffer into its position, and lastly attaching the pilot to the carbody, which again is just a snap-fit. A coupler lift bar is also included and should be applied on the opposite car end, running it beneath the rear coupler.

It has only been a year since the Milwaukee Road took over the UP's City trains run between Omaha and Chicago, but the lasting effects of the agreement are quite apparent as displayed by the yellow and gray colors on this October 28, 1956 passenger timetable. UP fashion Armour Yellow and Harbor Mist Gray became the standard paint scheme for the whole *Hiawatha* fleet as captured by Walthers on their latest passenger train series – the Yellow and Gray *Twin Cities Hiawathas*. Note the vintage buttons handed out by the railroad to patrons of the fabled Milwaukee Road trains declaring them honorary *Hiawatha* Tribe Members.

A Happy Member of the Hiawatha Tribe

I'm tickled pink, or should I say yellow and gray, with Walthers' second release of the *Twin Cities Hiawatha*. The entire set is very well detailed and, other than the minor effort that's required on the part of the modeler to finish them off, will be the pride of anyone's passenger train roster. Also keep in mind that the E7s could be used for hauling the Milwaukee's other passenger trains, as well, and, as many of the original 1948-built *Hiawatha* cars began entering pool service later in life, they, too, could be found in other train consists. Even the Super Domes made their way to service on the likes of the UP's *City of Denver* and *Challenger* as well as on the CMSt.P&P's Madison to Chicago trains of the mid 1960s. Yes, there are many noteworthy attributes of the Walthers' Milwaukee Road *Twin Cities Hiawatha* that will easily take you in and make you a member of the Hiawatha Tribe as it did me.

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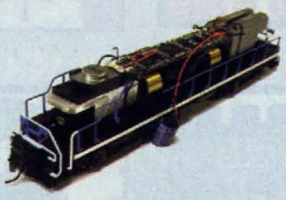

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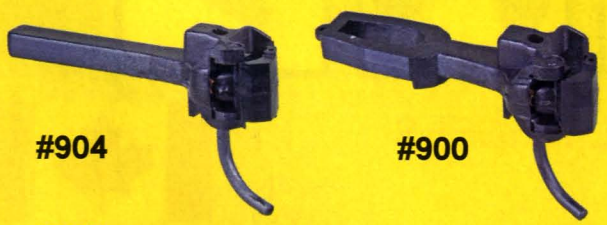

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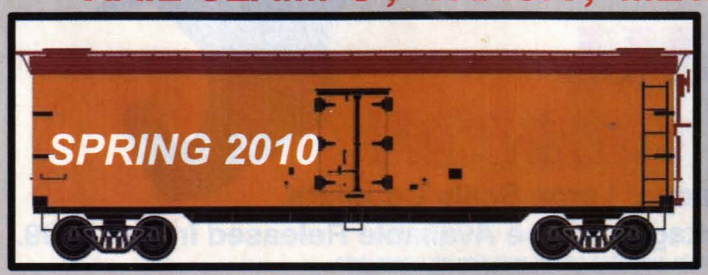

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Big Blow joins Athearn's Ready-To-Roll Roster

Review and Photos by David Otte

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By-The-Numbers

Union Pacific 51 – 60 Series Gas Turbine

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HO 1:87 • Type: Gas Turbine

Traction Tires? No

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷ Loco Wt	= Efficiency
4.0	30.4	13.2%
Volts	Amps	
12	0.32	

Analog DC

Start Volts = 2.2

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
2.2	0.20	2.9
4.0	0.16	12.7
6.0	0.17	29.7
8.0	0.18	44.8
10.0	0.19	61.0
12.0	0.20	73.9

ATHEARN'S Ready-To-Roll product line has carved out a nice niche for itself within the hobby industry by offering model railroaders affordable, well detailed, DCC-ready, factory-painted and assembled models. Lately, some of their more recent locomotive releases, such as the SW1000/1500 switchers, have really caught my eye with their upgraded tooling and use of road-specific details, but I was totally in awe upon the arrival of their newest Ready-To-Roll model, the Union Pacific Gas Turbine.

This 100 percent newly tooled locomotive is loaded with details that made me check the box twice for the Genesis logo, a mark of Athearn's premier product line. Representing the first series of production gas turbines, the company's HO-scale replica is being offered in four different configurations based on the specific UP prototypes numbers 51, 54, 58, and 60 as they appeared at different points in their service careers. Furthermore, both numbers 54 and 58 include fuel tenders while modelers may also purchase a decorated, but unnumbered fuel tender separately.

[Editor's Note: Athearn has slated a second release of the Turbine for late June 2010.]

The HO-scale Big Blow is blessed with a whole host of add-on details. Visible here are the windshield wipers, wire handholds, window glazing, air horns, coupler lift bar, consumer installed step ladders, and cab interior. Note also the tread plate molded-in the top of the pilot, working headlight and non-blinking Mars light, and the McHenry brand plastic magnetic operating coupler. Just like the prototype, the Athearn Gas Turbines ride on AAR Type B trucks outfitted with 40-scale-inch-diameter wheels and separately applied brake cylinders.

Athearn is offering four different roadnumbers, all exhibiting unit-specific details. Our sample, number 58, which was delivered in June of 1953, is equipped with a fuel tender, which it received in the mid 1950s. She also boasts a specific grid pattern of closed, louvered, or wire mesh-covered carbody air intakes that appeared to change on all the gas turbines throughout their decade of service on the UP. Finally, our number 58 displays an appropriate short turbine rooftop air intake and a well executed UP paint scheme fitting for the era. Just think, at the time of her retirement in the summer of 1964, number 58's odometer read an impressive 911,988 miles!

Westward Ho!

To say the least, the UP ran through some pretty wide-open spaces out west. Big country and steep grades required some hefty horsepower to pull the UP's heavy tonnage trains at the fastest speeds possible. These demands made by the environment on the railroad had the UP's motive power department in a continual search for the biggest and best locomotives. Out of this development came the now famous Challengers, Big Boys, and, of course, the gas turbine electrics.

It was the General Electric Company's early experimentation with turbine designs, first powered by steam and later gas, that introduced the UP to this radical new type of motive power. While the steam turbine was branded a failure back in 1939, GE was inspired by the accomplishments of the Brown-Boveri Company and their introduction of a 2,200 horsepower gas turbine electric locomotive constructed for the Swiss Federal Railroad in 1941. Subsequently, GE teamed up with the American Locomotive Company to design its own gas turbine electric, which they unveiled in the fall of 1948. Rated at an incredible 4,500 horsepower, the streamlined locomotive had cabs at either end of the carbody and utilized a low-cost fuel known generally as Bunker C fuel oil. Due to the heavy viscosity of this cheap fuel, the gas turbine was also equipped with a steam generator to heat the oil so it could flow properly.

After surviving eight months of company evaluations, the Alco-GE gas turbine was sent out west to the UP for more extensive testing. Delivered to the road in UP colors and numbered 50, the gas turbine saw system wide use and performed very well on the most arduous of runs on the Wyoming Division between Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Ogden, Utah, up Sherman Hill, and through the Wasatch Mountain range. After 21 months of notable service and an odometer reading of 101,231 miles, Number 50 was returned triumphantly to GE in the spring of 1951.

Just What is a Gas Turbine?

Perhaps the most familiar form of a turbine today is a jet aircraft engine. The principle is as follows: air is drawn in from the atmosphere and compressed. The compressed air is then superheated by directly burning fuel in it and the resulting hot compressed air is used to perform work as it re-expends to atmospheric pressure. In particular, the gas turbine on board the GE locomotives compressed the atmospheric air to six times normal pressure. After the compressed air was additionally heated, the resulting hot gas moved at great velocity against the curved blades of the turbine causing a drive shaft to spin. Through gear reduction, the shaft drove four direct-current electric generators, which then supplied power to the eight traction motors. Railroaders gifted the locomotive with the name "Big Blow" due to the jet exhaust sound emitted from the turbines.

So in general, the gas turbine electric is very similar to the diesel electric with the only major difference in the prime mover. The turbines used, to a degree, the same trucks, traction motors, and controls as their diesel powered counterparts. In fact, all the UP's smaller class gas turbines were also equipped with 250 horsepower diesel engines for powering the auxiliary equipment and hostling the locomotive at speeds under 25 mph, as well as for bringing the turbine up to firing speed.

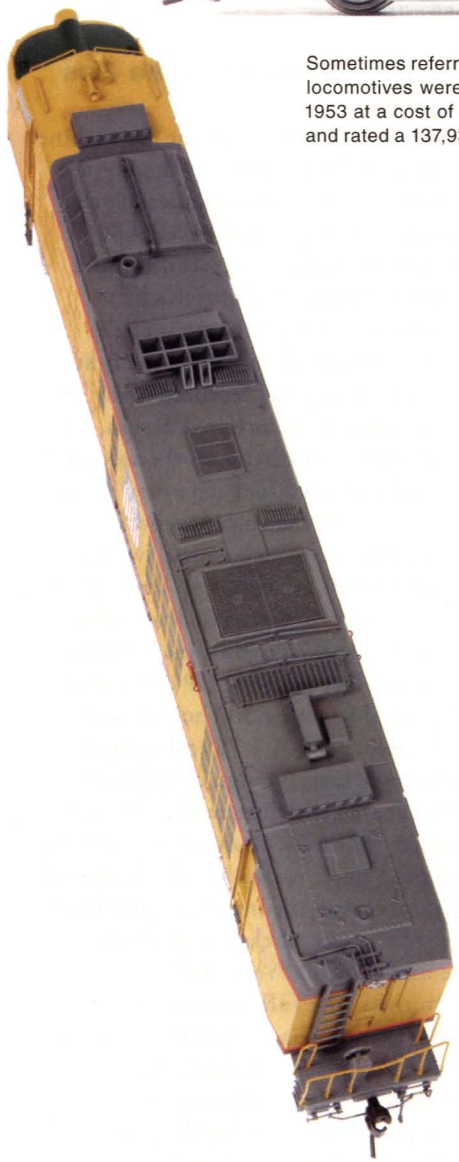
The Rise and Fall of the Gas Turbine

GE's experiment with the gas turbine electric finally paid off. As the UP was so impressed with the number 50, they placed their first order for ten 4,500 horsepower turbines in late 1951 and numbered them 51 – 60, which are the subjects of the Athearn models. Delivered in 1952 and 1953, the first production turbines featured many enhancements to the original design, most notably the elimination of the second cab and increased fuel economy. Right from the start, the turbines' performance was impressive on the average hauling 5,000 ton trains up better than one percent grades without any helpers.

Pleased with the continued success of the GE locomotives, UP ordered an additional fifteen 4,500 horsepower units numbered 61 – 75 and incorporated some major design changes, most noticeable of which were the recessed exterior walkways along each side of the carbody. These catwalks, which allowed easier access to the internal equipment, earned the second class of gas turbines the nickname of "Verandas."

In their first full year of service, the 25 gas turbines handled ten percent of all the UP's freight trains. Furthermore, it was not unheard of to see the 4,500 horsepower turbines double headed not to mention the occasional sight of a Challenger or Big Boy helping out a turbine with an extra long train during the final days of steam. There is even a rare event recorded where by a turbine ended up as the power on a streamlined passenger train when its main motive power broke down. Later, when many of the turbines were set up for multiple unit control in the late 1950s, it was common to see the gas turbines MUed with GP9s, F-units, SD24s, and SD40s.

Sometimes referred to as Baby Turbines, the UP's 51 – 60 series locomotives were delivered between January 1952 and August 1953 at a cost of $502,035 each. Measuring 83 feet, 6.5 inches and rated a 137,930 pound starting tractive effort. Equipped with a 74/18 gear ratio, the 4,500 horsepower units could muster a maximum speed of 65 miles per hour. The new Athearn Ready-To-Roll models are well-crafted HO-scale replicas that perfectly reflect the many nuances of this unique UP motive power.



There are a lot of interesting details to be viewed on the roof of a gas turbine. Starting front to back, the Athearn model displays dual air horns, electrical cabinet ventilation box, turbine air intake with photo etched side screens, the turbine exhaust port, dynamic brake grids and blower grille, radiator cooling fans with see-through grille, photo etched roof platform, auxiliary diesel muffler with cover plate, another electrical cabinet ventilation box, and the steam boiler exhaust stack. A steam hose and control line junction for connecting to the fuel tender is situated next to the hand-applied plastic ladder, which leads down the rear of the carbody to a platform equipped with Celcon end railing and an add-on brake stand with wheel.

One notable modification to the appearance of the 4,500 horsepower class was the addition of auxiliary fuel tenders to the fleet in 1956. The running gear was obtained from retired 9000-series class steam locomotive tenders with water compartments from two of the tenders spliced together forming a 24,000 gallon fuel tank. This allowed the turbines to operate the 992 miles from Ogden to Council Bluffs, Iowa without refueling.

A final class of 30, dual-unit, 8,500 horsepower, super-turbines made their way on to the UP roster between 1958 and 1961. However, even during the delivery of these locomotives, the UP was realizing that, after several years of service, the small turbines were becoming too expensive to maintain despite their earlier praiseworthy performance. As maintenance costs started to exceed the operating costs of the diesel fleet, the turbines began to be retired. By the summer of 1964, the last of the 4,500 horsepower units were retired with the super-turbines remaining in service until the end of the decade. The development of higher horsepower diesels such as the UP's 6,600 horsepower DDA-40X Centennial and the rising costs of one-time surplus Bunker C fuel also contributed to the demise of the Big Blow.

Athearn's Gas Turbine

At about 17 inches in length when coupled to its auxiliary fuel tender, the Athearn Gas Turbine is comparable in size to another great Union Pacific locomotive Athearn has previously offered, the steam powered 4-6-6-4 Challenger, and every bit as interesting to view. The 2 pound, 2.9 ounce duo of finely tooled diecast metal frame and plastic body shell construction gives an air of a brass model about it, but at a substantially lower price. The Athearn model sticks closely to all the major dimensions of the prototype based on the data shown on Union Pacific Railroad company drawings.

As with most models on the market today, a number of details found on Athearn's Gas Turbine, such as panel lines, bolt heads, access doors, and the like, are all molded in the carbody shell: nothing really new here. On the other hand, there is an unanticipated abundance of separately applied parts to note on this locomotive including: wire handholds, end platform railing made from flexible engineering plastic, delicate windshield wipers, access ladders (rear ladder is factory installed while body side step ladders are consumer applied), coupler cut bars, air hoses, air reservoir tanks, brass bell under the frame (consumer applied) brake stand, rooftop piping and electrical cabinet ventilation boxes, turbine exhaust port, dynamic brake grids, turbine air intake, the auxiliary diesel engine's roof mounted muffler complete with cover, and single chime air horns. Below, the sideframes of the familiar looking AAR type B road trucks are simple in execution, but enhanced with add-on brake cylinders and a speed recorder cable on the lead unit. Above, the cab contains clear window glazing that is practically flush-mounted and through which a uniform gray colored interior cabin can be seen complete with engineer's control stand. Behind, the tender also features under-

body details, add-on plastic ladders, wire handholds, access hatches, handbrake wheel, fuel connection pipe and valve, and plastic roofwalk handrail.

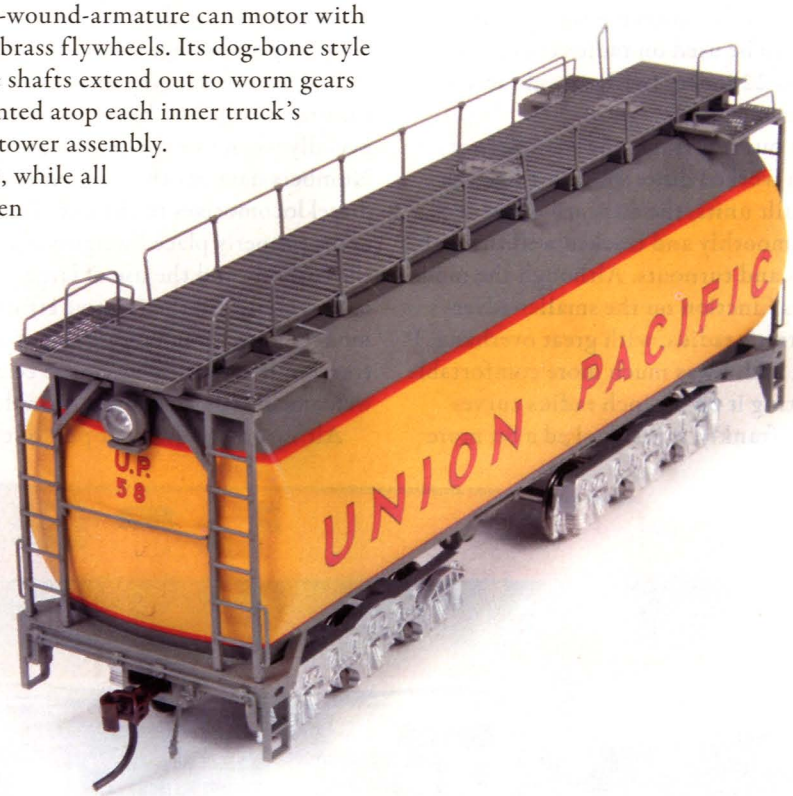
Impressed so far? Well, I have saved some of the most impressive details for last. On the locomotive, there are photo-etched metal grilles over the radiator cooling fans and dynamic brake blower and on the sides of the rooftop turbine air intake as well as photo-etched metal roof platform grates, which also adorn the top of the tender. Furthermore, the grid of carbody side air intake openings feature either individually applied louvered, chicken screen covered, or plain tiles that reflect the specific arrangement of each prototype Athearn is offering. In addition, the UP experimented with the use of Farr chrome grilles to protect these air intakes and this feature is offered as well on number 51. Likewise, the use of the raised-style rooftop turbine air intake can be seen on number 54.

Now, with that said, I do need to point out just a couple of missing details that came to my attention when comparing the model to photos of the real deal. First, the cab side windows are void of some of the intermediate framing found on the prototype's windows and the engineer's rearview mirrors are lacking as well. Second, on tender equipped numbers 54 and 58, the very noticeable steam and control hoses that ran from the top rear of the locomotive to the top of the tender are not present. I must admit though, with this later omission, that such a detail may not be too practical for the average operator as any properly modeled connection would require pivot points in order for the coupled pair to traverse various track radii.

Despite my minor nitpicking, our sample of number 58 had the fit and finish of a top of the line model and I have no qualms with the accuracy or quality of its decoration at all; it's just superb. Due to the inclusion of a fuel tender, this particular version best represents number 58, originally delivered to the UP in July of 1953, as she appeared between 1956 and her retirement on June 30, 1964 having racked up a total of 911,988 miles during her decade-long career.

Turbine on the Test Track

Under the hood of these miniature Turbine replicas, is a single 5-pole skew-wound-armature can motor with dual brass flywheels. Its dog-bone style drive shafts extend out to worm gears mounted atop each inner truck's gear tower assembly. Thus, while all sixteen wheels act as electrical pickups, only the inside trucks are powered, leaving the outer trucks to act as ponies similar to a steam locomotive. Athearn relies solely on the two powered trucks and the weight of the model (the bulk of which comes from the metal chassis, battery box, and gearboxes) for tractive effort; no traction tires are used. Just as found on the full-sized 4,500 horsepower turbines, each pair of trucks is coupled together by a metal span bolster. The pilots are also connected to the bolsters, as they appear to be on the GE units.



Auxiliary fuel tenders were added to the 4,500 horsepower turbines in the mid-1950s to increase the locomotives' range, which had been limited to about 400 miles based on its onboard 7,200 gallon fuel tank. The fuel tenders' 24,000 gallon tanks and running gear were cobbled together mostly from 9,000 series steam locomotive tenders. As with their Turbine, Athearn has incorporated a great many details into the tender such as the separately applied access ladders, metal handholds, Celcon rooftop handrail, and the marvelous looking see-through, photo etched metal roofwalk and platforms. Note also that the tender is equipped with its own backup light, which requires the tender to be electrically connected to the locomotive.

While the locomotive houses all the necessary electronics for operation, the fuel tender is equipped with a backup light. Lacking its own electrical pickups, it requires an electrical connection to the locomotive through the rear pilot. Note the handbrake wheel and fuel connection pipe with shutoff valve modeled on the tender as well as the coupler lift bar and air hose connection on the rear of the Turbine.

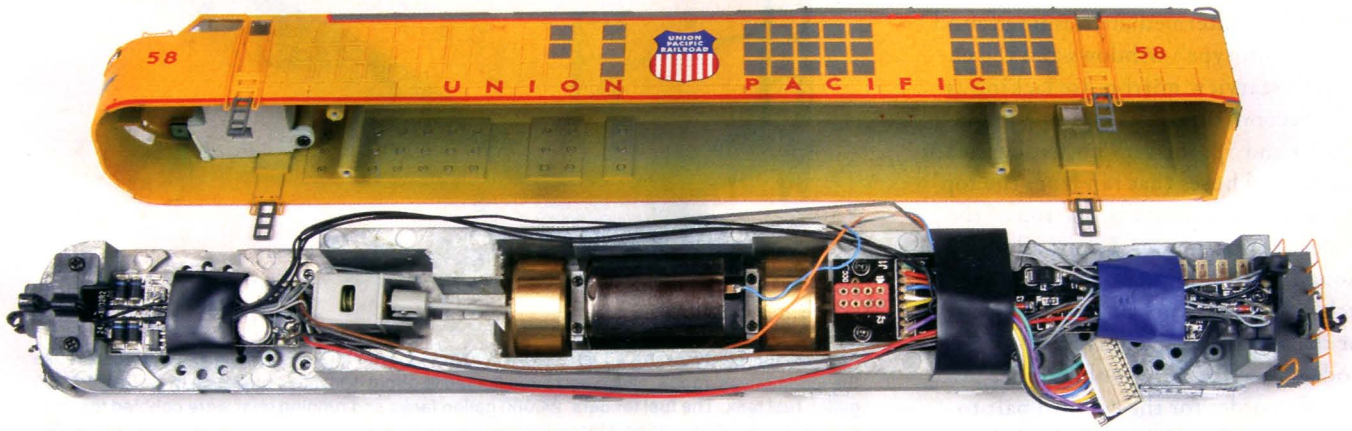
The gap visible between the top of the model's pilot and the bottom of the carbody is present on the prototype too, although it is not quite as pronounced as on the Athearn version. Besides being a legitimate detail, this pilot arrangement is beneficial in allowing the Athearn model to be used on radius curves as tight as 22 inches (without side access ladders installed).

On our test track, the span bolster design worked quite well. Just like the GE-built units, the Athearn Turbine rode smoothly and tracked well through curves and turnouts. Although the model does function on the smaller advertised track radius, with great overhang, I might add, I was much more comfortable operating it on 36-inch radius curves where, frankly, it just looked a bit more realistic. On a level layout, our sample pulled a somewhat mediocre 33 freight cars in addition to the very free-rolling 4.4 ounce tender through these larger radius curves before any wheel slippage was encountered. The eight-axled yellow beast took better than half the train length up an average 2 percent grade as well. This is not a very impressive haul for such a large and heavy locomotive, especially when one compares our By-The-Numbers data of other contemporary diesel locomotives to the new Turbine. Some properly placed weights inside the carbody and the use of larger radius curves could aid the tractive effort of the model, but with only four axles powered, traction tires would have been certainly welcomed with this power train design.

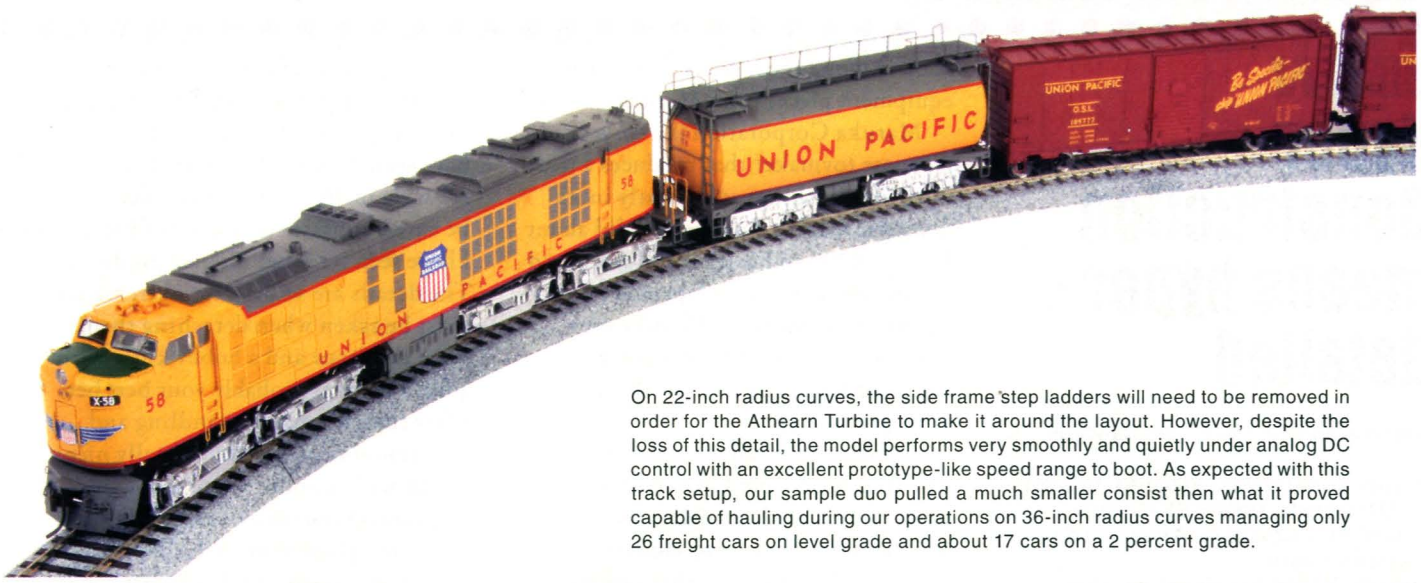
Although the drawbar pull of this model may not meet the typical model railroader's expectations, the Athearn Turbine is equipped with an impressively smooth and quiet mechanism — one of the best that I have experienced in a ready-to-run model. Our sample had a remarkable analog DC-powered minimum consistent speed of less than 3 scale miles per hour straight out of the box without any break-in period. The maximum speed at 12 volts was clocked at just under 74 scale miles per hour, which is not too far over the 65 mile per hour maximum for which the 4,500 horsepower turbines were geared.

Lighting effects include directionally controlled headlights, non-blinking Mars light, and a single-beam backup light. The bulbs used on the model we sampled appeared to flicker and were generally hard to see at less than 6.5 volts, but were brighter and consistently lit at voltages thereafter. Athearn has also thoughtfully designed the locomotive/tender sets so the Turbine can be run on its own as the real units did when first delivered by GE. The tender carries no electronics other than the wiring for its back-up headlight, which simply plugs into the rear pilot of the locomotive via a two-pin micro connection.

McHenry plastic fabricated magnetic operating knuckle couplers are installed on both ends of the turbine and the tender so double heading these units with other locomotives is possible with or without the tender. I found all four couplers to be mounted at the proper height as well as all sixteen locomotive and twelve tender RP25 wheels to be properly gauged when checked with a



Outfitted with a single can motor and dual flywheels, the Turbine has its inner trucks powered only, although all 16 wheels act as electrical pickups. The onboard circuit panels provide lighting control and are DCC ready with both 8-and 9-pin NMRA plugs. Athearn also made their offering sound-ready by providing mounting pads and pre-drilled holes in the frame for speakers up to 1.2 inches in diameter. When time comes for the DCC conversion, only four screws need to be unfastened from beneath the chassis in order to remove the body shell. Note that I have removed a clear plastic protective plate and some of the electrical tape for a better view of the motor housing and delicate wiring.



On 22-inch radius curves, the side frame step ladders will need to be removed in order for the Athearn Turbine to make it around the layout. However, despite the loss of this detail, the model performs very smoothly and quietly under analog DC control with an excellent prototype-like speed range to boot. As expected with this track setup, our sample duo pulled a much smaller consist then what it proved capable of hauling during our operations on 36-inch radius curves managing only 26 freight cars on level grade and about 17 cars on a 2 percent grade.

National Model Railroad Association's (NRMA) Standards Gauge.

Last, but not least, the HO-scale Gas Turbine is a DCC-ready model able to accept a sound decoder with either an NMRA 8 or 9-pin connection. There are even two speaker mounting surfaces with pre-drilled holes in the underframe able to handle speakers up to 1.2 inches in diameter. I didn't have a chance to install a decoder in our sample, but QS Industries has one available with a Turbine sound file in their Quantum Revolution-U series of sound decoders (5050-481). Also, at the time of this review, Soundtraxx announced they had in development a Tsunami Gas Turbine sounder decoder to be released shortly.

Terrific Turbine

While it may not live up to the GE Gas Turbine's sheer brute force when it comes to tractive effort, Athearn's Big Blow is still a winner in my book. For three bills, you're getting a commendable level of prototype accuracy, excellent detail, outstanding decoration, a plug-and-play DCC-sound ready setup, and a refined, quiet drive train. Relative to the price of other ready-to-run diesel locomotives on the market today and compared to the cost of similar offerings in brass, the Athearn models are a real steal.

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REVIEW N

Hyper Construction means hyper-detailed

Review and Photos by Bill Cawthon

Hyper Construction Vehicles, Volume 1, 1/150 scale, MSRP: $8.00 each
Kawasaki 65ZV/70ZV Wheel Loader, various colors
Hitachi ZX200 Crawler Excavator, various colors
Tadano GR250N 25-ton Rough Terrain Crane, various colors
Japan Ground Self Defense Force Heavy Tow Truck, various colors
Kawasaki K20WHB Pneumatic Compactor, various colors

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MOKEI IMPORT has begun distributing an assortment of new vehicles in Japanese N scale. Among the models are some heavy equipment pieces from Maruka.

Maruka Corporation is a 47-year-old Japanese toymaker that produces a wide range of playthings sold mostly in its domestic market. Last year, it did about $74.3 million in business and employed 108 people. Like many Japanese (and American) companies, Maruka uses a Chinese contract manufacturer, the Zhejiang Kuge Toy Co., for the majority of its production.

As far as I can tell, since I don't read Japanese, the Hyper Construction series, which made its debut last fall, is Maruka's first foray into model railroad scale vehicles. Whether that's correct or not, the models we received from Lee Durham at Mokei Imports make me look forward to the next batch, which is scheduled for this year.

The Models

The Maruka models come from the manufacturer in a blister pack, which is then packed in a colorful cardboard outer carton. Unfortunately, the colorful print doesn't include any printing in English other than "Hyper Construction" and "N Gauge," so you don't know what you're getting until you open the box.

Opening the box is a worthwhile task because what's inside is a pretty nifty model. Each one has moving parts, rubber wheels where appropriate and extremely fine detailing. They all come with a sprue of additional detail parts and decals to be added by the modeler, including some of the finest handrails I have seen. One set I measured came up at 2.7 scale inches in diameter, oversized, to be sure but better than a lot of handrails I have seen on other N-scale products. The details are so delicate, extreme care must be taken when detaching them from the sprue and a hobby knife with a fresh blade is probably your best bet. After that, it's careful handling and tiny amounts of glue, but a really nice model will be your reward. An exploded diagram on the back of the blister pack shows the placement of the detail parts.

The models are a mix of plastic and diecast, adding some welcome weight if you want to add a load, and each has its own features which I will run through briefly.

The Kawasaki Wheel Loader has an articulated body for steering and a bucket that not only raises and lowers, but tilts. A set of steel pins act as the hydraulic rams to keep the bucket in position.

The miniature Hitachi excavator has real rubber treads that move on rolling wheels. The cab swivels and the boom raises, lowers, and extends. Once again, the bucket is positionable.

The Tadano mobile crane has free-rolling wheels, a swiveling superstructure and a boom that raises and lowers. There's even a swing-out extension boom.

Maruka's Hyper Construction, Vol. 1 includes five pieces of Japanese heavy equipment, most of which is perfectly suitable for an American layout. From left to right: Kawasaki pneumatic compactor, Tadano rough terrain crane, Hitachi excavator, Kawasaki wheel loader, and a Japanese military heavy wrecker.

Each model comes with a sprue of detail parts and a small sheet of decals. Be very careful when handling the detail parts; they are quite delicate.

The boom on the military wrecker swivels and raises and lowers.

The compactor has a simulated compactor on the pivoting front axle, ready to compact the soil for your N-scale roads.

Even though there are user-added parts, the models already have painted details. Since these are machines that make their living in dirt or industrial environments, you'll probably want to add some weathering. How much is up to you, but excavators and wheel loaders get dirty.

The only thing about the Maruka vehicles that bothered me was the hooks on the mobile crane and wrecker; they don't swing. They are molded in the traveling position, so a bit of work is going to be required if you want to pose them in action.

It should be remembered these models are made for Japanese N-scale, which is 1/150, so they are about 6.25 percent larger than American N-scale items. However, given these models are all heavy equipment, they should be usable on American layouts. Kawasaki and Hitachi both sell construction equipment in the United States, so that's no problem. Of course, you can leave off the brand decals, too.

Final Thoughts

All things considered, these are pretty nifty pieces and your favorite hobby dealer can order them from Mokei. As I mentioned at the beginning of this review, Volume 2 of the Maruka vehicles is due out this year. If Volume 1 is any indication of what we can expect, we should be in for a treat.

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New Auto Scenes from Woodland Scenics

N — Woodland Scenics has released three new AutoScenes. The automobiles are custom painted. The available scenes are: Shove It or Leave It (#AS5336) — three boys are left on the side of the road with their broken down car, they have two choices: shove it home, or leave it. They decide on the former; the set retails for $12.99. Cop'n a Kiss (#AS5337) — a police officer is making his rounds on "Lover's Lane" and catches a couple stealing kisses in the back seat, it retails for $13.99. Ike's Ice Cream Truck — (#AS338) one ring of the bell and children come running to this van full of sweets, the set is available for $16.99.

Woodland Scenics, PO Box 98, Linn Creek, MO 65052-0098; 573-346-5555; Fax: 573-346-3768; E-mail: sales@woodlandscenics.com; www.woodlandscenics.com

New Fire Engine Series from b2bReplicas

1:50 — b2breplicas is showcasing a new line of TWH Collectable Pierce Quantum Fire Pumpers from Seminole County, Florida. Also available are TWH Collectable Peterbilt 335 Mechanic Trucks. The die-cast vehicles are now available.

The Pierce Quantum Fire Pumpers are based on innovative fire trucks used by countless fire stations and multiple Army and Air Force establishments.

Each features a top mount pump panel, a detailed inner cab with accurate instrument panel, replicated work and safety lighting, front and rear tow hooks, and accurate gauge panel with fills and discharges. Functions include pivoting, opening cab revealing detailed engine and transmission, steerable front wheels, rotating hose reels, and functioning suspension. The Pierce Quantum Fire Pumper (#081A-01108, #081A-01169, & #081A-01170) measures 8 inches long by 2 inches wide by 2.5 inches tall. It retails for $190.00.

Also available from b2bReplicas is the

Peterbilt 335 Mechanic Truck. Used to maintain and repair fire engines, each truck includes a 360 degree rotating crane with angle meter, replicated diamond plate decking, and accurate hose and wire placement. Each Peterbilt Chassis features a detailed inner cab, realistic air and hydraulic hose placement, and an opening hood to reveal a detailed diesel engine. Measuring 6.125 inches wide by 2 inches wide by 2.5 inches tall, each Peterbilt Mechanic Truck (#098-01183 & 098-01186) retails for $149.95. For more information on these models, contact b2b Replicas. For retail, visit www.3000toys.com

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Norscot's Cat 797F Off-Highway Truck and 336D L Excavator

1:50 — Norscot is offering a 1:50-scale diecast model of the Cat 797F Off-Highway Truck. The 10 pound model measures nearly a foot long, and according to Norscot, utilizes details normally attained only by higher priced, limited edition replicas. Also available is a 1:50-scale Cat 336D L Hydraulic Excavator, the largest member of Caterpillar's line of medium hydraulic excavators.

The diecast Cat 797F Off-Highway Truck weighs in at nearly 10 pounds.

The Cat 797F Off-Highway truck features: a truck bed that raises and lowers on realistically rendered three-stage hydraulic cylinders; opening engine compartment and engine detail; front wheel steering with working linkage; rear suspension; tread and pattern detail on all visible metal surfaces; transmission detail; free-swinging "Rock knockers" on the underside of the truck bed; functioning hold-down cables under truck bed; metal grab bars, railings, and other trim detail; folding ladder and mirrors; authentic tire tread pattern; clear windows reveal interior cab detail; and Caterpillar Power Edge trade dress and precise tampo printed nomenclature. The model (#55206) measures 11-3/4 inches x 6-1/4 inches x 5-3/4 inches (33 x 15.97 x 14.50 cm). It retails for $377.95.

Norscot's Cat 336D L Hydraulic Excavator measures in at 10 inches x 2-1/2 inches x 3-1/2 inches (25.4 x 6.35 x 8.89 cm) and features metal tracks; moveable boom, stick, and bucket; 360 degree rotation on chassis; realistic boom, hoses, and grab rails; and clear windows with interior cab detail. The replica also features Cat's Power Trade dress design. The model (#55241) retails for $100.95.

Norscot Group, 1000 West Donges Bay Rd, Mequon, WI 53092; 800-653-3313; Fax: 800-653-4904; E-mail: norscot@norscot.com; www.norscot.com

Athearn announces early 2010 release of Ford F-850 Boom Truck

HO — Athearn has announced the January 2010 release of their new Ford F-850 Boom Truck. Based on vehicles in use from the 1960s to the 1980s, each model features a new deck and boom tooling. The truck's boom is positionable and the outriggers can be modeled in the raised or lowered position. Details include rubber tires, clear window glazing, interiors with separate steering wheel, and other separately added details.

Initial releases will include: New York Central (#96806), Pennsylvania (#96807), Rock Island (#96808), Santa Fe (#96809), Southern (#96810), and Union Pacific (#96811). The Ford F-850 Boom Truck has an expected retail price of $24.98 each.

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REVIEW HO

The BEST Freight House is the one you build for yourself

Review and Photos by Denis Dunning

HO-scale Wolfeboro Freight House (#1006-B), MSRP: $89.95
Footprint: 14 inches x 5 inches x 4 inches high

Bollinger Edgerly Scale Trains
375 Bean Hill Road
Belmont, NH 03220
603-267-1818
www.besttrains.com

OVER the years the number of railroad depots built in America must number in the tens of thousands, but in model railroading it is usually the passenger station that is selected for a layout. However, the freight revenue is what kept the railroads running and the freight depot was essential in this operation.

Bollinger Edgerly Scale Trains is now offering an HO kit to build a typical freight depot with a large freight platform. This is the type of structure that would be accurate for any time period on a layout as it was originally constructed in the late 1800s and is still in use today, though not as a railroad structure.

The Prototype

Wolfeboro is located in New Hampshire, and was served by a little-known line named the Eastern Railroad. This all-wood depot was built in 1871 and over the years, the railroad now being operated by the Boston & Maine, continued to be a hub of freight service until the line was abandoned in the 1960s.

The depot was designed with freight doors on each side; the freight platform was on the rail side and transfer of freight to trucks took place on the opposite side of the building.

According to Bollinger Edgerly, the B&M sold the depot in the 1960s to a furniture store for storage purposes. Subsequently the old depot was sold to the Wolfeboro Oil Company, which still uses the building for storage.

There was a large passenger depot located next to the freight depot. This is a very fancy structure with mansard roofs and a large center tower. Bollinger Edgerly also has a kit for this structure, No. 1006-A. Both kits can be viewed on the BEST web site.

The Model

The freight house kit is composed of both clapboard siding and scribed wood siding, with the various parts being laser cut; wood roofing sub-base, diamond-cut peel-and-stick shingles, Tichy plastic windows, stripwood for the platforms and trim, and a nice assortment of cast metal detail parts round out the rest of this kit.

The instructions include a number of photos of various parts of the construction, but they do not include a scale drawing of the depot. The written instructions seemed to be lacking in describing some of the steps of the construction and I found myself going back and forth between the photos and the various parts before I really understood what BEST had in mind.

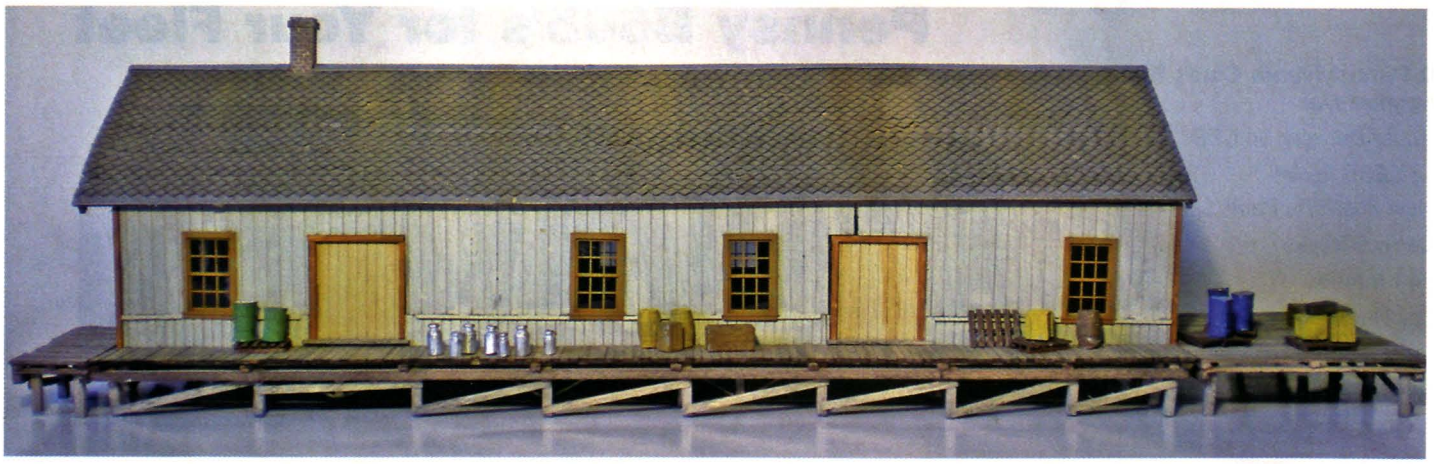
Also included are some views of the depot as it presently appears, but the freight platform has been removed. Thus a set of plans for the structure would have been quite helpful.

The building of the kit is rather straightforward once you become familiar with the various parts. The long walls are built in three sections, which are held together with support pieces on the backside. The lower part of the walls has vertical scribed siding on the platform side and long horizontal strips on the trucking side.

The prototype depot was built with support pillars with bracing along the bottom of the walls. These can be seen under the freight platform, but are covered by the horizontal bracing on the other side of the structure. I made a scale drawing of these assemblies and fabricated them before installing on the bottom of the walls.

Windows for the depot are molded in plastic and should be painted before they are installed in the openings precut in the walls. The freight doors are supplied as pre-cut pieces of scribed wood. These, along with the doorframes and corner trim, should be pre-painted.

The roof of the building is made from two sheets of wood. Rather than attaching these to the walls, I find it is easier to make the roof a free standing item. Copy the shape of the end walls onto heavy cardstock and then glue the two roof sections to this. This will allow easy access to the building should you later want to add lights or a full interior. The diamond-shaped shingles are pre-cut in long strips and are self-



The freight platform wraps around three sides of the depot. This is built in three sections. All of the various cast metal detail parts are included in the kit.

stick. Use care in aligning the strips, as the diamond shape must be maintained for the correct look. There are spacing lines printed on the instructions, but do not cut these out until you have built the freight depot, as the plans for the platforms are on the opposite side of the page.

I found that it was rather easy keeping these aligned by having a small light on the surface. This allows you to keep the spacing of the diamond shingles correct. It takes time to get the strips applied correctly, but the finished roof will look very realistic.

The instructions state the shingles should be painted after they are applied to the roof base as some paints will attack the adhesive, I painted the model shown with a flat brown spray paint and had no problems. Bragdon Enterprises weathering powders were then applied to create an aged look to the shingles.

Full-size plans are provided for building the freight platform. This is composed of cleanly milled stripwood, but the parts must be cut to size by the modeler. The instructions do provide excellent photos of the various steps in building the platform. The platform is built in three sections and wraps around three sides of the building. Take your time in getting these exactly the same height.

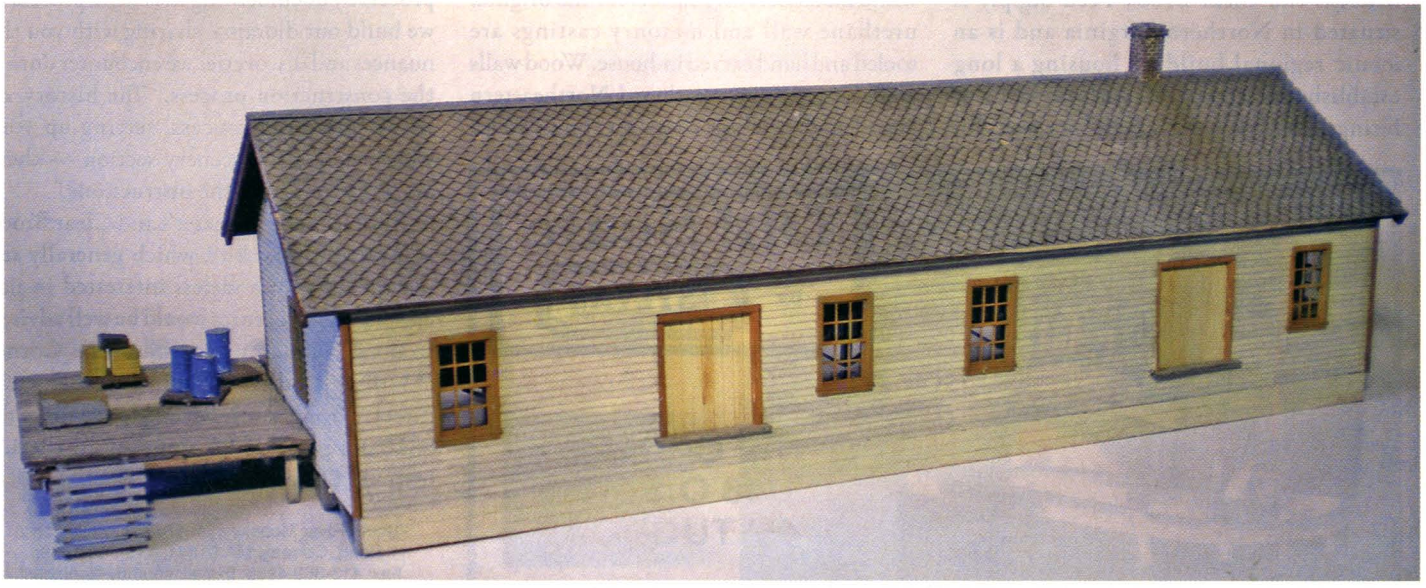
Once the platform is completed and painted, it is glued evenly with the bottoms of the freight doors to the edge of the wall. The steps at the office end of the building are made with laser-cut stringers and strip wood. Use masking tape to hold the stringers upright, then glue the steps onto them.

The Diamond Shingle roof is made with pre-cut, self-stick strips that are applied to the wood sub roof. The steps at the end of the Office end platform are built up from laser-cut runners and strip wood steps.

There is a large selection of cast metal detail parts to complete the look of the depot, including barrels, wooden crates, pallets, and two sizes of milk cans. These should receive a base coat of dark primer, and then be painted with colors of your choice. There is a nice sheet included with the instructions that provides a number of good ideas for weathering wood and metal and plaster castings.

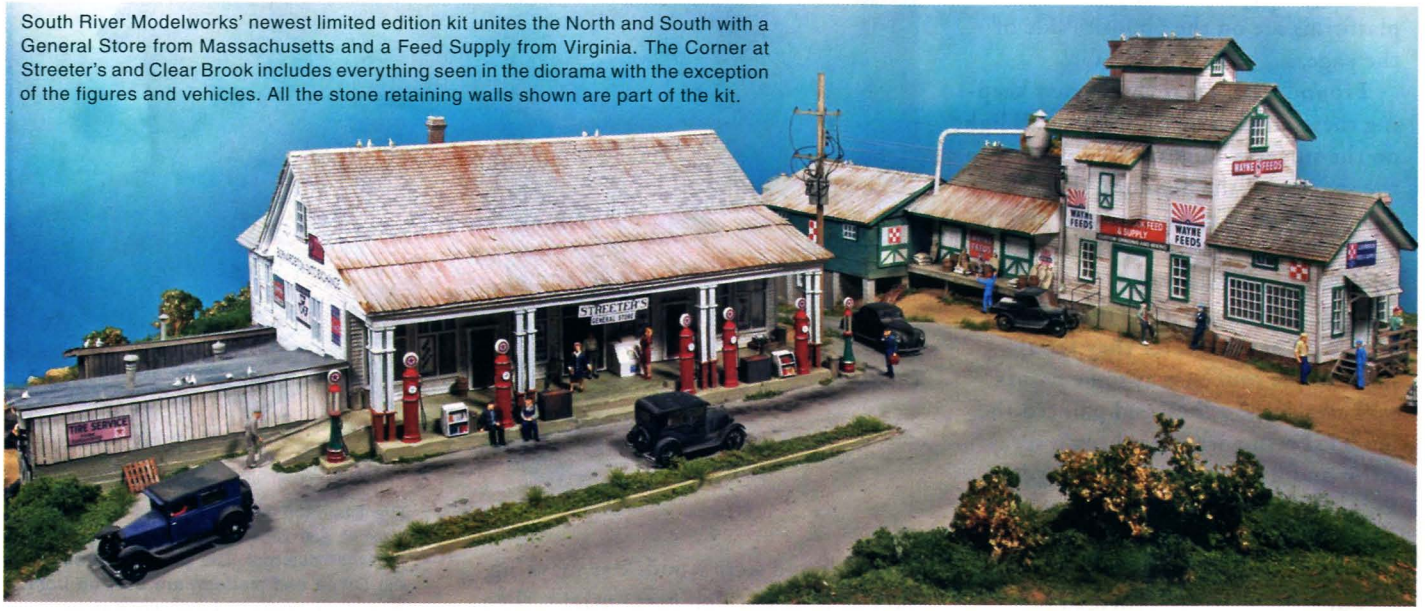
Final Thoughts

This is a very well designed kit, and once you study the instructions thoroughly, as mentioned, you should have no trouble building the depot. As with all craftsman type kits, you should take your time and not try to rush the construction. I find that each step should be taken as a separate project. I've heard many modelers say they are overwhelmed with a wood kit, but taking it step by step it is quite easy. Probably one of the nicest things about this particular structure is that it can be utilized for a number of different uses, not just as a line side structure.



The rear side of the depot has two freight doors to transfer freight to highway trucks.

North meets South in new limited edition kit from South River Modelworks



South River Modelworks' newest limited edition kit unites the North and South with a General Store from Massachusetts and a Feed Supply from Virginia. The Corner at Streeter's and Clear Brook includes everything seen in the diorama with the exception of the figures and vehicles. All the stone retaining walls shown are part of the kit.

HO — South River Modelworks has unveiled its annual HO-scale craftsman kit. Named "The Corner at Streeter's and Clear Brook," the kit depicts an old feed mill and market that would have been built in the earlier years of 20th century. Businesses such as these can still be found operating in various communities to this day.

Though the actual concept comes from the imagination of the folks at SRMW, the buildings are based on structures found in life. Officially called Bernardston Auto Exchange, but known to the locals as Streeter's, the shop is a well-known family general store in Western Massachusetts whereas the Clear Brook Feed Supply is situated in Northern Virginia and is an iconic regional building housing a long-established business. As with previous offerings, South River Modelworks looks for eye-catching buildings that tell a unique story, in this case a merging of the North and South, to create their annual pieces.

Designed to compliment each other, the general store and feed supply can either be placed in conjunction as shown in the photograph, or added to separate areas of the builder's layout as desired. According to SRMW, each building uses a gentle slope to add interest to more than one view, though either building can also be built for a flat site.

SRMW kits rely on a variety of materials to bring the design together. The core three are: urethane wall castings, wood walls, and white metal details. Masters for the original urethane wall and masonry castings are tooled and hand carved in-house. Wood walls are laser-cut from weathered Northeastern Scale Lumber siding. Every kit comes with a jewelry box filled with an extensive assortment of white metal castings made from SRMW's own patterns. The only items not included are the figures and vehicles.

In addition to the design and tooling, the directions are also done in-house. The foundation of the instructions is an extensive, spiral-bound book featuring large, clear print and over 150 photos and diagrams. This year there will be a color center section in addition to plan cards and color posters.

"This instruction set is not just a litany of 'attach Part A to Part B,'" states owner Bob Van Gelder. "As much as possible, we attempt to demystify the entire craftsman kit building process by documenting the entire process as we build our diorama, sharing with you the nuances and discoveries we encounter during the construction process. The history, diorama planning process, setting up your workbench, a full scenery section — these are all contained in the instructions."

The Corner at Streeter's and Clear Brook is limited to 450 kits, which generally sell out quickly, so modelers interested in purchasing the structures would be well advised to do so as soon as possible. The Corner (#320) will be available in October 2009 directly from South River Modelworks for $320.00, plus $15.00 shipping in the US (extra to Canada and overseas).

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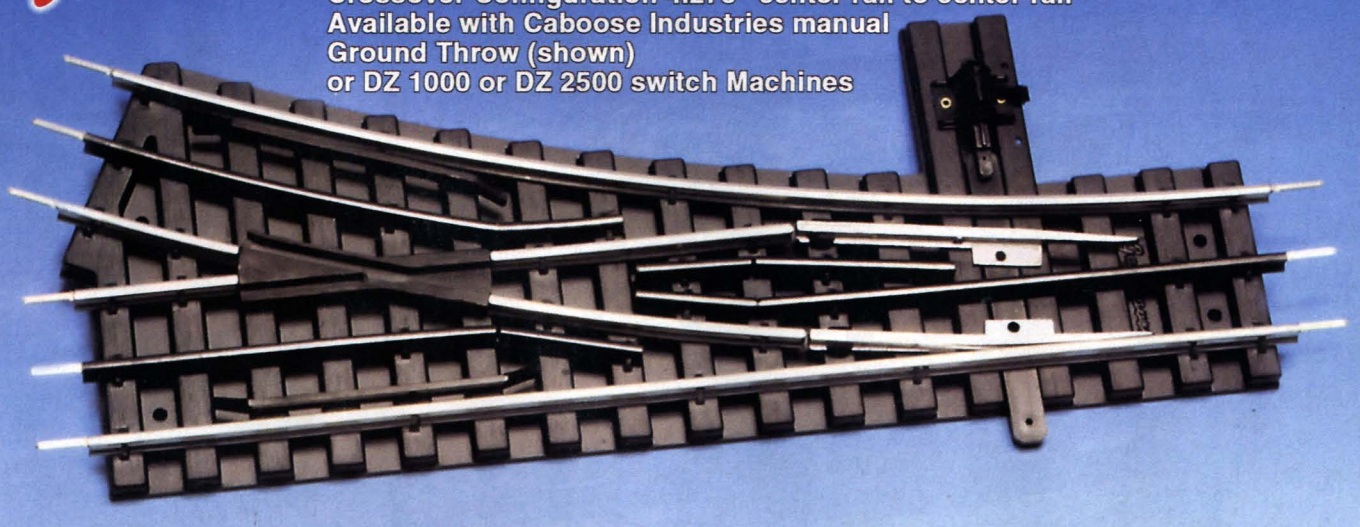

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REVIEW HO

Walthers' Engineering Office creates a versatile city structure

Review and Photos by Dick Foster

Engineering Office (#933-2967), MSRP: $44.98
Footprint: 10.125 inches by 5.75 inches including steps

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BUILDINGS similar to the Walthers Engineering Office were common throughout the early part of the twentieth century, but most have been replaced by more contemporary structures and steel utility-type buildings. Yet some of these structures still survive today and can be seen in major cities and industrial districts across the country. This style of building is used by a variety of businesses from steel mills and new industries to government offices and hospitals. Therefore, this structure would be at home on any number of layouts from the mid-1920s to 2009.

This building kit is typical of many Walther offerings, as it comes with more parts than are required to finish the building — and these parts come in handy when doing scratch building or kitbashing on an existing kit. It is apparent, after you build several similar types of buildings, that the foundation, roofs and many sidewalls all share a basic design, which saves production costs.

An Excellent Start for Beginners

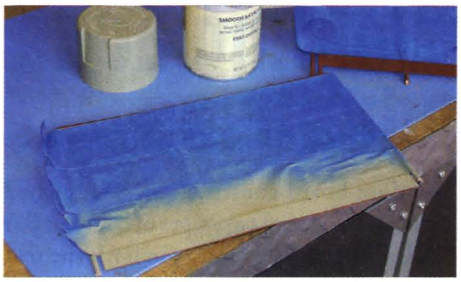
This is an excellent kit for the beginning modeler since it is straightforward and doesn't require any special skills aside from painting and gluing. I chose to keep the window frames the same color as molded, but painted the walls using a cheap spray-can "rusty red" primer color. This got rid of a dirty yellow brown plastic color that was inappropriate for the walls. I think modelers often don't take the time to look at real-life buildings and industrial locations to try and get a feel of the muted colors and general "grayed down" look of many buildings. We have all seen too many pictures of pristine plastic walls and roofs that would benefit from some simple painting and weathering.

In the case of the Engineering Office, after I painted the walls, I then hand-painted the windowsills and upper header blocks with Floquil UP gray. I could have masked off the walls and then sprayed these details, but it was just as easy to use a very fine brush and take my time. I let these parts sit overnight to be sure they were thoroughly dry. Then the four wall sections were lightly weathered using Bragdon weathering powders in colors of brown and medium gray. The gray color tended to stick in the joints between the bricks and highlighted the brick texture.

At first I thought that this was too much weathering, but after a light application of DullCote, the effect was toned down and looked quite realistic. Again, give plenty of time for the DullCote to dry completely. I then went back and installed the "glass" onto the already installed window frames. I used a small suction tool, which helped place the "glass" and kept my fingers off of the plastic surface. I took a page out of Stephen Priest's recent station review (February 2009) and used masking tape on some of the windows to suggest window blinds or shades. The effect is quick and simple

Walthers Office Building stands ready to receive its first tenants. The nature of this kit makes it readily usable for any number of purposes.

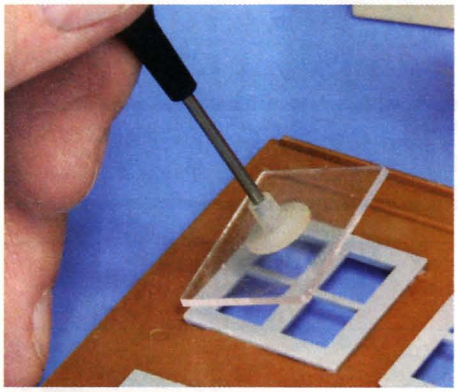
The walls were sprayed with a rusty looking primer that simulated a dark brick color followed by a coat of a concrete-looking color for the molded in foundation.



Cheap, spray-can paints were used for both. The walls were weathered with Bragdon Weathering Powder, and fixed with Testor's Dullcote.

and adds a lived-in look to the building. In the case of this review, I choose not to name the type of industry that is housed in this building. Walthers supplies several decals with typical industrial names, but you can opt to make your own sign or leave the exterior blank.

Next, the four walls were glued together and onto the foundation base. I got trapped only slightly when I used the wrong pilasters on one of the end walls.



A small suction cup tool was used to help position the numerous "glass" windows in their frames.

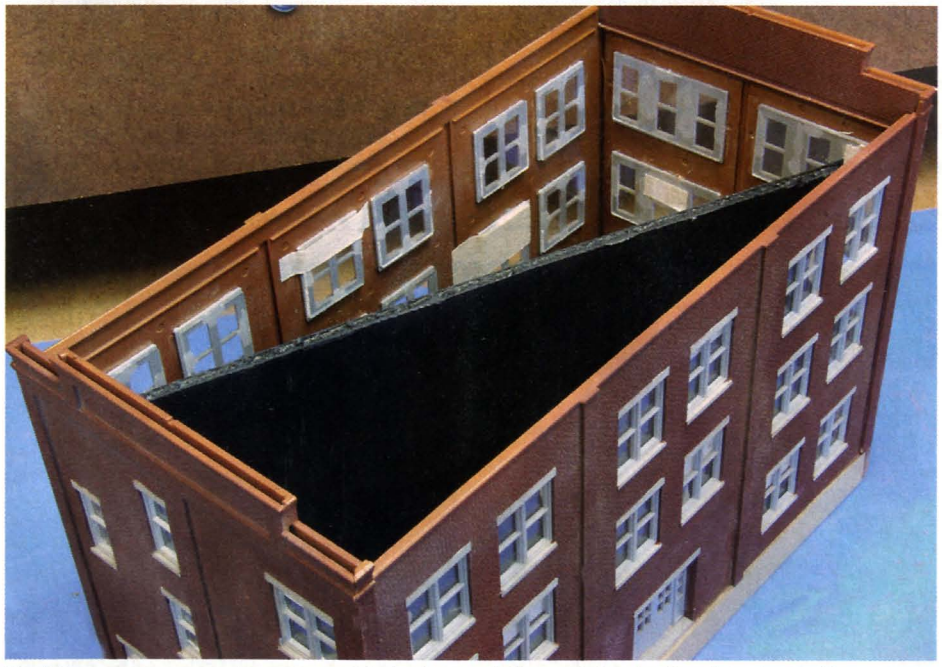
I thought it was strange that there were holes in the pilaster for some other part. Note that there are two sets of pilasters and be sure to use the ones without the holes! I just didn't read the instructions closely enough.

I then glued a piece of black foam-core board to the bottom foundation to form a floor and a piece diagonally across the building, to make it harder to see nothing was inside. In some buildings that have far fewer windows, just painting the walls black often is good enough, but with this building, the floor and diagonal piece were the logical choice.

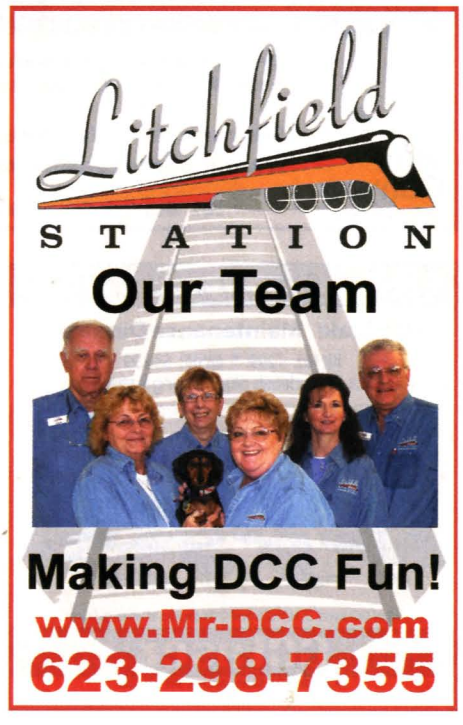
The last steps to complete the building consisted of gluing the cap trim pieces on the two end walls. I felt the roof was too plain just to be glued in place so I textured it with rough flat black paint. The three skylights on the roof were spayed with Dullcote on the inside to partially block seeing into the center of the building. Finally, the three stairways were glued in place on the ends and sidewall. Again, it should be pointed out that things like a roll-up door and a loading dock could replace the big doorway on the sidewall and completely change the type of building. This is one of the attributes of this type of kit; it can be made to service a number of industry types and locations.

Final Thoughts

Overall this kit went together in a short time and all pieces fit perfectly without any forcing or filing. The modeler should remember to file or sand off any remaining pieces of the injection molding sprue before gluing the parts together. This step will always insure a snug, perfect fit. I can certainly recommend this building to novice and experienced modelers because it can be built right out of the box or kitbashed to fit a certain era. In either case, your new business will have a sturdy and good-looking home.



Black foam core was used to make an interior floor and diagonal view barrier. Note the masking tape on some inside windows. It is used to simulate shades and looks very good from the outside.

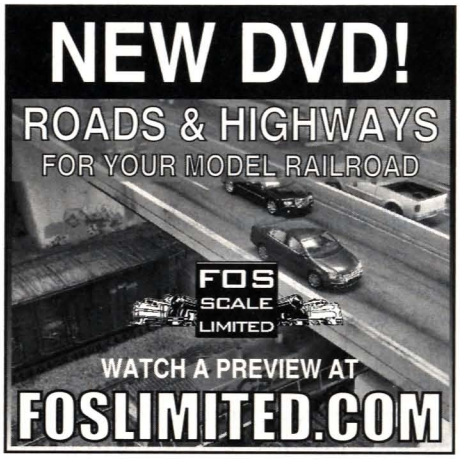


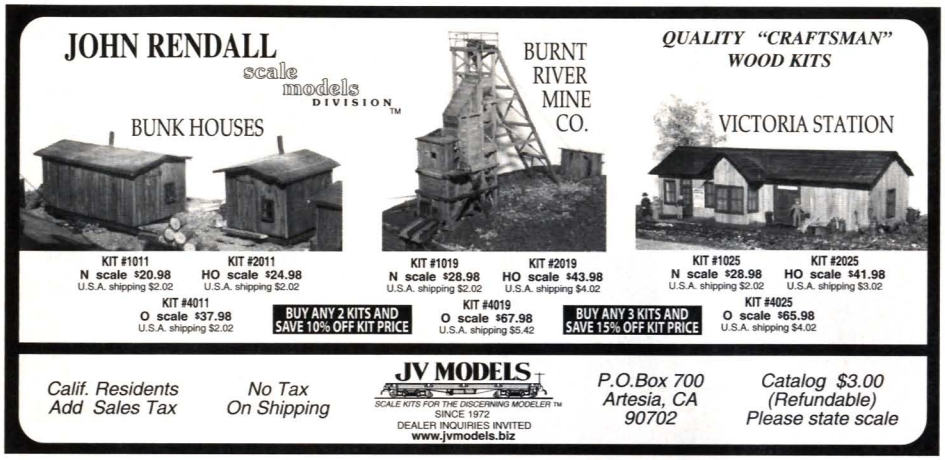
Hurst Boiler & Welding adds rustic touch to blue collar industries

HO — Bar Mills Scale Models has announced the release of the third structure in their "1 of 500" series," a line of HO-scale craftsman kits that, once sold out, will no longer be produced.

The Hurst Boiler Building is a two-story wooden model with a rustic look and some tacked-on improvements that add a touch of rural charm. Each kit features individual board-on-board construction, laser-etched vertical siding, and two types of laser-cut Bar Mills shingles. The roofing in both the rear shed and storage space is constructed of ribbed aluminum. The Hurst Boiler kit retails for $89.95.

Bar Mills Scale Model Works, P.O. Box 609, Bar Mills, ME 04004; Phone/Fax: 207-929-3400; E-mail: barmillsmodels@yahoo.com; www.barmillsmodels.com

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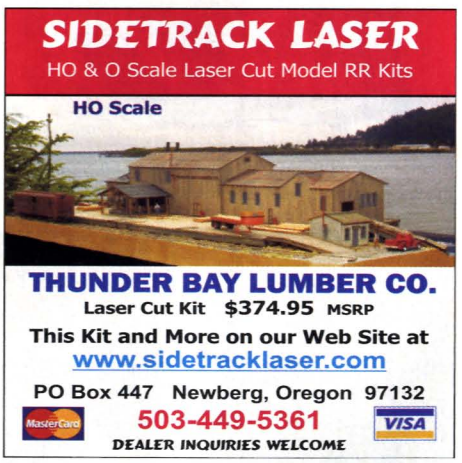
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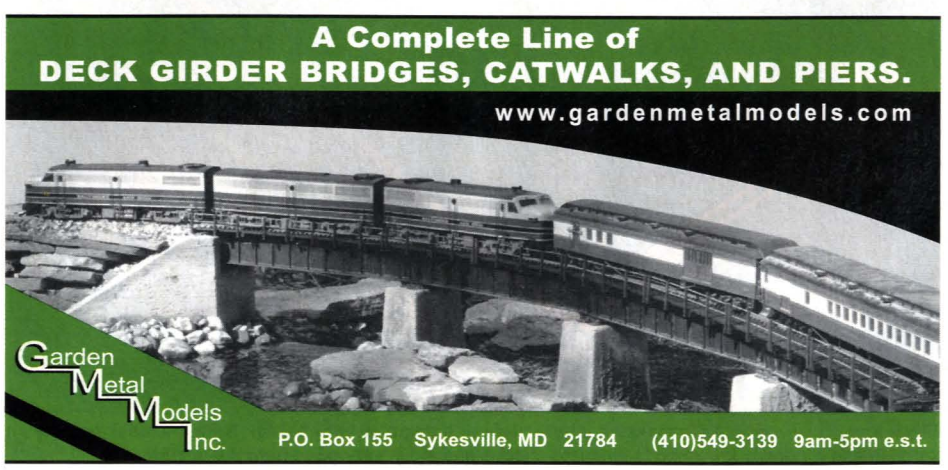
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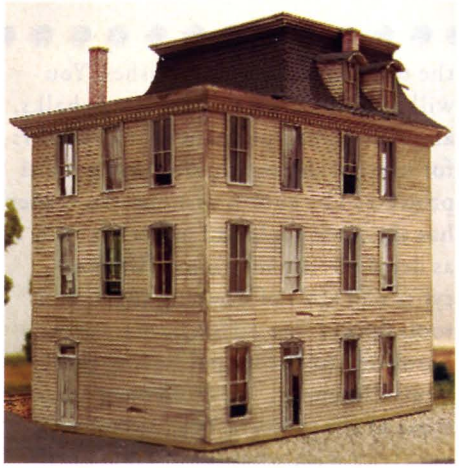

Haunted House From Nick & Nora Designs

HO — Nick & Nora Designs has released their newest Craftsman Structure Kit in time for fall festivities. The Haunted House is based on a boarding house on Ontongan Street in Baranga, Michigan, and was designed from photographs from the early 1900s, when Baranga was known for its lumber industry.

Each Haunted House kit features laser-cut clap wood siding and dental molding with strip wood included for all the trim molding. Also included are over 40 doors and windows from Grandt Line and laser-cut peel-and-stick shingles. The finished model measures 4 inches wide by 6 inches deep by 6-1/2 inches tall. The Haunted House (#ST004) comes with detailed and illustrated instructions for assembly and retails for $160.00 (plus $7 S&H).

This kit and others can be ordered online or by sending a check or money order to Nick & Nora Designs.

Nick & Nora Designs, 12 Penny Lane, Newark, DE 19702; 302-366-7506; Fax: 302-283-1042; www.nickandnoradesigns.com

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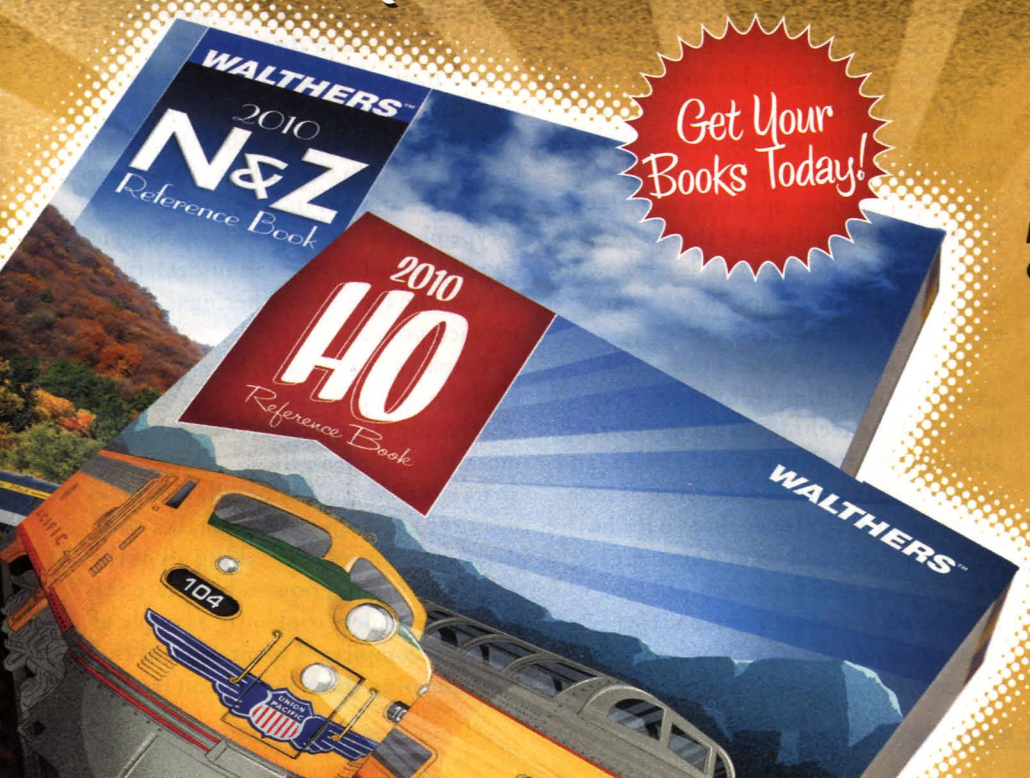

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REVIEW Book

Projects you can do in a Day or Two

Review and Photos by Art Lake

Done in a Day by Pelle K. Soeborg
Full Color, 88-page, softcover; MSRP: $19.95

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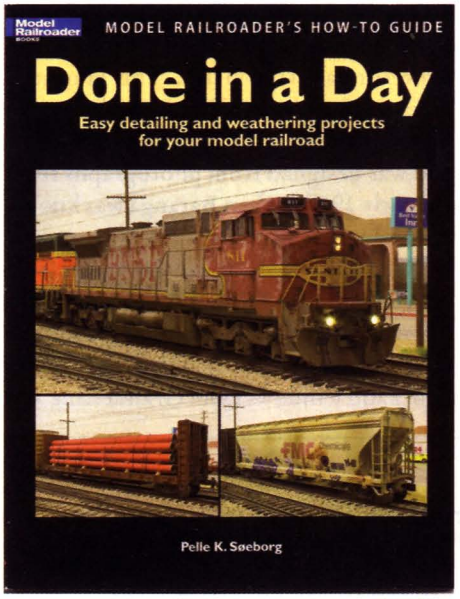

Model Railroader
MODEL RAILROADER'S HOW-TO GUIDE
Done in a Day
Easy detailing and weathering projects for your model railroad
Pelle K. Soeborg

In one of Kalmbach Books' latest publications, author Pelle Soeberg walks you though more than a dozen simple weathering and detailing projects that add realistic touches to rolling stock and locomotives — and all of them can be finished in a few hours. The key is the author's highly detailed step-by-step photos and illustrations. These one-afternoon projects are fun and fast, and most of all, they'll make your layout more realistic.

KALMBACH PUBLISHING, publishers of *Model Railroader* magazine, has been publishing how-to guides and books for many years. They are easy to read and very informative; covering different aspects of model railroading. Pelle K. Soeborg has written a number of articles for *Model Railroader* throughout the years and has provided photos for model train calendars, Woodland Scenics, and Walthers catalogs. Kalmbach Books published his first book about his home layout, *Mountain to Desert; Building the HO Scale Danville and Donner River*, in 2006. His latest book, Done in a Day, has more than a dozen easy weathering and detailing projects that will show you how to add realism to your rolling stock and locomotives. Well-illustrated, easy to follow instructions make this book suitable for beginning model railroaders. There are many tips, ideas, photos, and suggestions that will benefit many modelers at any skill level.

Done in a Day

As the title implies, many of these projects can be completed in an afternoon or two. Many projects are written in such detail with pictures, it is like looking over his shoulder when completing your own projects. Pelle gives us suggestions on taking field trips to take prototype photos and getting information on the subjects you are modeling. He also explains how to implement the completed projects on your layout with this information and knowledge.

This book explains how to turn a shiny new boxcar into looking like it was past its prime, as well as adding graffiti, spills on tank cars, and rust on the roofs of old auto carriers. The detailed instructions and pictures on making pipe, heavy steel-coil, and removable hopper coal loads give the modeler the confidence to complete the project with their skill level and ability. Pelle explains how to add DCC decoders, with sound and lights to your older pre-DCC locomotives and how to add a multi-color paint scheme to a bare Kato GP35. With a few improvements and a light weathering, updating an Atlas Dash 8-40CW will make this locomotive look realistic. You will learn how to model the neglected and heavy weathered look to your older locomotives.

There are many descriptions and photos on modeling techniques. Pelle describes the techniques on weathering, airbrushing, applying pastel chalks, and painting that work best for him. These are prudent techniques that could be added to your toolbox of knowledge. The tools he uses for weathering are paintbrushes and an airbrush. He describes the type of airbrush and the reasons for each of the tools needed for the techniques he accomplishes. You will need some paint, powdered chalks, and fine-tipped permanent ink markers for most of the weathering and graffiti projects. The author assumes the reader has the basic tools and materials such as decal setting solutions, different types and sizes of masking tapes, and tools for cutting different materials. However, do not let not having these items discourage you from completing some of the projects, because you will get along with what is available until you can acquire the other tools and materials when needed. Drills, soldering iron and solder, wiring, and other items relating to the type of decoder and lights installation will be needed for the decoder and lighting project. Pelle added a nice touch by describing how he made a jig for holding models with a block of wood and piano wire for hands-free handling.

Applying What We Learned from the Book

This is not a "How-To" review; this is a review on a "How-To" book. With this in mind, we will attempt a project described in the first chapter, "Turn a shiny new boxcar into a freight hauler long past its prime." We will complete this project as the author has completed his project. Some modelers have a problem with taking a brand new shiny boxcar purchased with their hard-earned cash and turning it into an older-looking boxcar. I am one of those modelers. Any boxcar in good condition will also work for this project.

Pelle models Santa Fe, BNSF, and the Union Pacific in the deserts of Southern California and has included some prototype photos throughout his book. He gives us some background information on why the type of weathering is needed for each project.

Preparing the model, how to apply faded paint, creating a rusty roof, weathering the trucks and wheels, and modernizing with yellow reflective stripes is explained in detail. He shows us how to apply powdered chalks with detail photos and text taking all of the guesswork out on how to complete this task. The project took only a couple of hours to complete; I spent most of the time cleaning the airbrush and letting

Although not a brand new boxcar, this is how this car looked before the weathering process. I bought the boxcar at a swap meet for a dollar and this is the kind of rollingstock that I weather.

Done in a Day describes the author's technique and tells us what colors he used to weather his equipment. However, it is up to the modeler to choose the colors they will need based on the location setting of their layout. I used colors that closely matched our club's layout location, which is Utah and Arizona. It is weathered kind of heavily in places based on a photograph that I took of a similar boxcar parked on a siding in the desert after a dust storm.

This type of sprayer is primarily used as a household sprayer for chairs and other small projects around the house or garage. I used it for applying thinned washes and general painting of base coats instead of using an airbrush, which is used for detail painting. You can purchase this sprayer at most home improvement stores. When applying a thinned wash of a light color paint, be careful, you can not tell how much paint you sprayed until the paint is dry.

Pelle uses step-by-step photographs throughout the book, along with prototype images in order to make each project an enjoyable afternoon or evening experience.

the paint dry before continuing with other procedures.

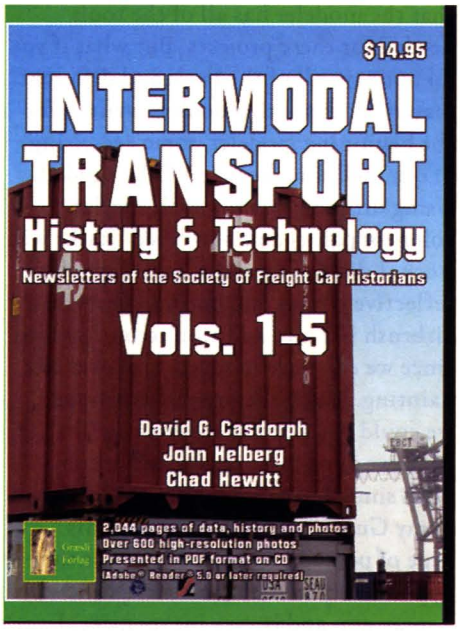
As stated earlier, the book assumes that the modeler has all of the tools needed for these projects. But what if you do not have all of the tools and different materials? Since this book is written for the beginning modeler, some exercising of our modeling license will be needed. Using different brands with similar colors of paints and powdered chalks will work. I did not have the decal for yellow reflective stripes and omitted them. An airbrush is a nice addition to our toolbox since we can have more control over our painting. Using the proper technique, we could use a can of spray paint (if the color we need is available) and accomplish similar results. I purchased a Preval Spray Gun from Home Depot. This type of portable spray gun gives us the opportunity to use a bottle of paint with a spray gun and is very inexpensive. I used this spray gun on another boxcar and achieved a convincing effect similar to the one created using an airbrush. Cleanup was easier and faster, making the project completion time shorter. Use caution when weathering the wheelsets and trucks, especially where the wheelsets are inserted into the trucks.

Closing Thoughts

When we began our path to become a model railroader, we set out on a never-ending quest for knowledge. To quench our thirst for this knowledge, we turn to these types of publications. We learn from what we read and through trial and error, we combine different techniques and materials that will work best for us. Kalmbach Books has filled this need and rumor has it that they will be publishing two or three more how-to books in the coming months. Pelle may model a different prototype, era, location, and scale (he models in HO scale); however, we could use different colors to match our era and location of the layouts we are modeling using his techniques. I used N-scale boxcars to test his techniques in chapter one.

This book was written very well with photos and text describing in detail on how to accomplish each project. Although written for the beginning modeler, any modeler will learn something from this publication. This book should find a place on the shelf in every modeler's library.

Digital Book Combines Wealth of Intermodal Transport History & Technology



DIGITAL BOOK — Highlands Station, LLC has released its tenth digital book. Produced in cooperation with the Society of Freight Car Historians, it includes Volumes 1 through 5 of their *Intermodal Transport History & Technology* newsletters. The CD has 2,044 pages of data, history, and 610 high-resolution photos. *Intermodal Transport* provides a wealth of information for intermodal modelers and historians, featuring articles by David G. Casdorph, John Helberg, and Chad Hewitt that cover a variety of topics and include many pictorials. Subjects include the first decade (1981 – 1990) of the intermodal era, detailed roster information for many reporting marks, 53-foot well cars, 45-foot steel containers, chassis, K-Line containers, KCI Konecranes gantry cranes at BNSF's Hobart yard, plus much more. This digital book is presented in PDF format (Adobe Reader 5.0 or later required), and all of the high-resolution photos can be zoomed in on for close examination of every detail...something not possible with printed versions. Pages may be printed for personal use. *Intermodal Transport* retails for $14.95 plus $4.85 S&H per order (US). S&H via International Priority Mail to Canada and Mexico is $10.95; add $12.95 for all other countries.

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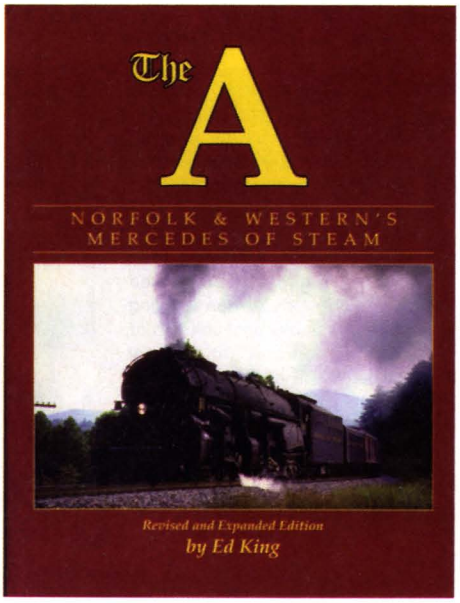
Historical Society Publishes the Story of Norfolk and Western's Mercedes of Steam

BOOK — The Norfolk and Western Historical Society has published *The A: Norfolk and Western's Mercedes of Steam*, a new hardbound book by author Ed King. King uses his personal experience with the N&W and with the men who designed, maintained, and ran these magnificent locomotives to write his account of the "A," a single-expansion 2-6+6-4. Forty-three "A" locomotives were produced in the N&W's own shops between 1936 and 1950.



The A: Norfolk and Western's Mercedes of Steam features over 170 pages filled with 200 black and white photos, 27 color images, drawings, and an index, along with a foreword by Robert A. La Massena and an Introduction by Bill Withuhn. The book covers the brief overview of the railroad, the evolution of the Mallet through creation of the A, and follows the steam locomotives through their service life.

The A: Norfolk and Western's Mercedes of Steam is available directly from the Norfolk and Western Historical Society for $64.95 plus $9.75 for Priority Shipping.

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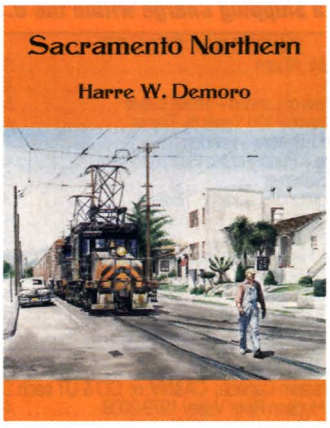

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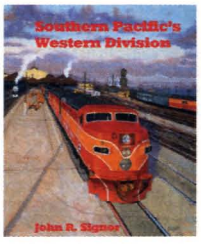

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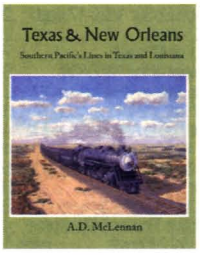

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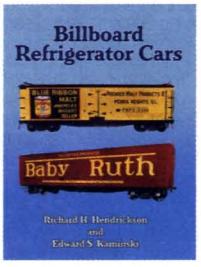

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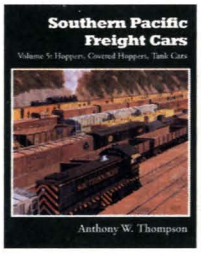

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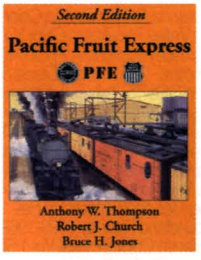

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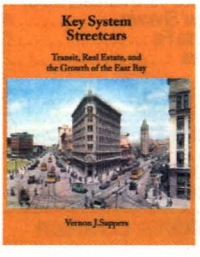

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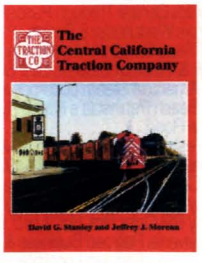

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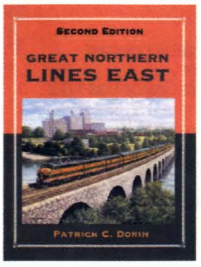

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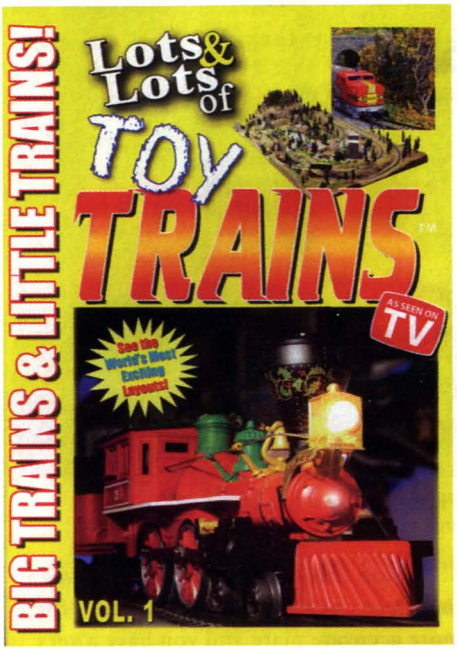
New Children's DVD Takes Viewers on a Colorful Adventure

DVD — Marshall Publishing & Promotions, Inc. has released *Lots and Lots of Toy Trains*, a new title in the company's line of children's DVDs. The 80-minute DVD is the fourth in the series of Lots and Lots of Trains, and is the first volume of Toy Trains.



Lots and Lots of Toy Trains features model trains of all scales set to music and sing-a-long songs of children's musician James Coffey. Trains shown include everything from Christmas to Halloween trains, to little brick trains, and big garden trains. It also features a journey to the world-famous Toy Train Barn and a visit to TrainFest, America's largest operating model railroad show.

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REVIEW HO

Howard's Hobby keeps your HO-scale vehicles street legal

Review and Photos by Wayne Calder

Vehicle License Plates, HO scale, MSRP: $1.50 per state

Howard's Hobby
116 Silver Hill Rd.
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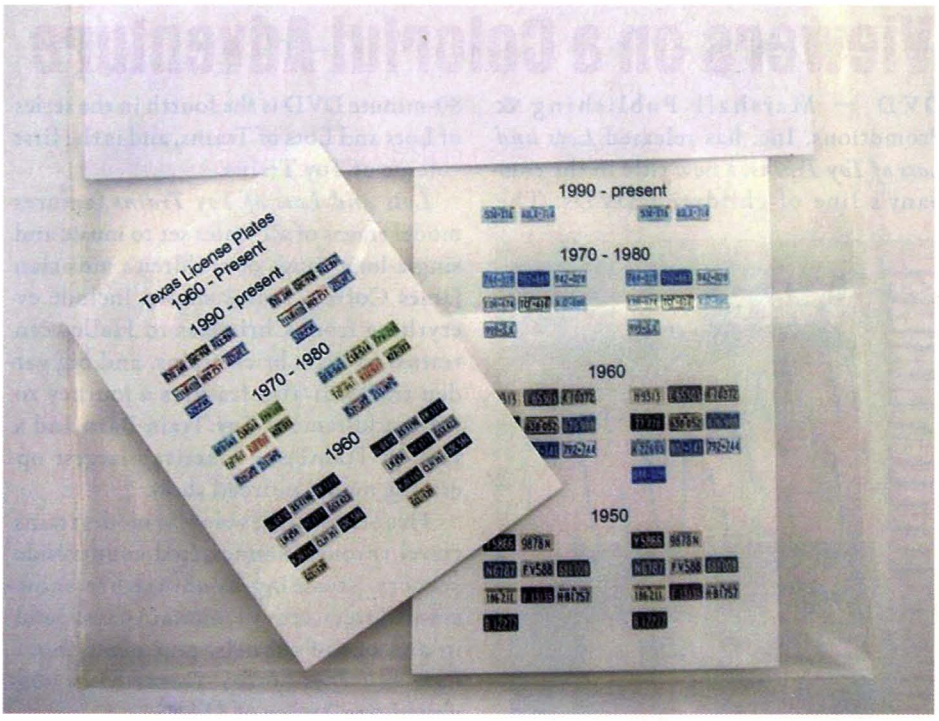


These HO-scale license plates are just the thing to add extra prototypical detail to the cars and trucks on your layout.

As a kid growing up in South Africa, license plates provided great fun on trips because the way they were designated was by province (think state) and city/town. Over time that changed as more cars were found on the roads and the city identification went away, thus making them akin to the American plates.

Before we go any further, we need a point of clarification. Some states refer to a license plate as a registration plate. For the purpose of this review we will refer to them as a license plate.

It is unlikely that you have ever taken the dimensions of the plate on your car. If you are running a modern-era car, it is exactly 12 inches across and 6 inches high. It doesn't matter if it is on a 9 foot long Smart car or an 80 foot long semi with "Abnormal Load" signs. It is a different story when it comes to different eras, the numerals and letter's sizes, location and number. In these, state laws differ widely.

As far as styles go, well there as many combos here as a numeric bicycle lock. Scenic plates, military plates, personalized ones, exempt plates, and on and on.

Here's a trivia stat; with 26 letters in the alphabet and numbers running from 1 to 9999, it is possible to care for 259,974 licenses. If numbers run up to 99,999, then nearly 2,600,000 licenses can be covered.

The Accessory

Each sheet (one state per sheet) has enough license plates to do at least twenty vehicles. It is important to understand that those forty or so license plates are divided into three categories; 1950s, 1960s, and 1970 – present, in most cases. So as to avoid confusion, when you purchase, for instance, the Ontario, Canada plates, you will get just one sheet, with 4 eras per purchase. Your sheet will arrive in a small Ziploc-type bag. It makes them easy to see and gives adequate protection.

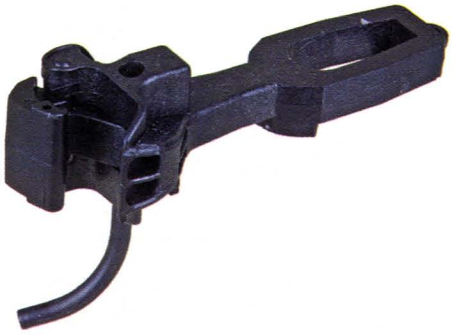
As far as this reviewer knows no other company offers full-color, period-correct license plates for 1/87 vehicles. This is a small detail that can be added to vehicles in your display and will have even greater effect with vehicles on your layout. It is one of those little above-and-beyond steps in modeling that will bring admiring comments from those who notice. The sets are certainly very affordable and being period correct is a huge bonus.

When you look at the sheet it soon becomes obvious that the images are photographs of real life plates that are reduced to scale size. The images are very sharp, very well defined. To truly appreciate this, put them under a magnifying glass. These plates are not decals. They are printed onto a gloss photographic paper and will need to be cut and glued. This works well for capturing the more reflective nature of modern plates. The downside to that is that it makes the plates too thick for our scale. If you want to reduce the thickness of the paper for a more accurate plate and you have a very steady hand, you can separate the gloss sheet on the paper from its backing with a very sharp blade. If your hands are not so steady you may want to try gently sanding the back off the paper.

I did find that some of the plates were out of scale. Okay, to spare you from having to go back a few paragraphs to see if I am contradicting myself about different sizes for different eras, let me define my statement. I live in Texas. I was thus able to measure the Texas plates under the "1990 – present" heading and scale them out to the real thing. In this case they were under-scale in width. The Howard's Hobby plates range from 10 to 14 scale inches wide. What makes it plausible that there are a few others that are out of scale is the fact that plates within one state, in a common era vary in width and height, too.

All in all this is an excellent idea and given the bang-for-the-buck-and-time there is no reason why you should not avail yourself of some sets and get to gluing. Enthusiastic railroaders make sure their railway cars are prototypically correct in having individual identification numbers — don't treat your automotive cars any differently.

Kadee releases new coupler line for G-scale



G — Kadee Quality Products is announcing a new generation of "G"-scale couplers.

The new AAR prototypical Type "E" coupler is contoured with visible casting marks and a new design to replicate the AAR appearance. Operational features include Kadee's proven Magne-Matic Delayed Uncoupling but now with a "hidden knuckle spring" — a black spring that is recessed and hidden out of sight inside the coupler head.

These new couplers are designed to use the existing Kadee large-scale draft gear boxes so modelers can easily change out the older couplers for this new design. They're packaged as "coupler only" with no draft gear boxes for a low-cost replacement coupler but soon will also be available packaged with the most common Kadee draft gear boxes for body or truck mounting.

The pulling face inside the moving knuckle now has a flat contour that eliminates the sliding up uncoupling caused by a flexible mounting. According to Kadee, these patent pending couplers are completely compatible with Kadee's older style couplers so modelers can run both styles together without any concerns.

These new couplers come in an improved #830 type body-mounted style shank and centerset, medium offset, and large offset shanks for the smaller type of draft gear boxes, such as the #831 and #835 boxes. In addition there now is a solid shank coupler for custom mounting where needed, as in a non-centering steam locomotive pilot. Product numbers and prices will be announced at a later date.

Kadee Quality Products Co., 673 Avenue C, White City, OR 97503-1078; 541 826-3883; Fax: 541 826-4013; www.kadee.com

Tahoe Model Works announces new HO-scale Truck

HO — Tahoe Model Works has added a new Coil-Elliptic 50 ton truck to its line of HO-scale replacement trucks. The trucks feature one-piece black acetyl plastic moldings with separate brake shoe detail, and non-magnetic, insulated metal RP-25 contour wheelsets. Trucks are also available with "Semi-Scale" (.088 inch wide) wheels. The Coil-Elliptic 50 ton trucks with wheel sets (TMW-108) or semi-scale wheel sets (TMW-208) retail for $6.25 per pair.

The Coil-Elliptic trucks added leaf springs to provide a smoother ride, and Double Truss trucks with this spring package were manufactured from the early 1930s to the late 1940s. These trucks were used by roads such as BAR, C&O, CGW, D&M, DT&I, Erie, LNE, LS&I, MRS, N&W, NP, TA&G, VGN, and WM, and some AC&F tanks cars built in 1937. A similar 70 ton version was used by B&M, CNJ, CRP, D&H, DT&I, Erie, LNE, MEC, and PRR.

Tahoe Model Works, 5801 Sheep Dr. # 7, Carson City, NV 89701-1420; 775-882-8822; Fax: 775-882-8813; e-mail: b.leppert@att.net

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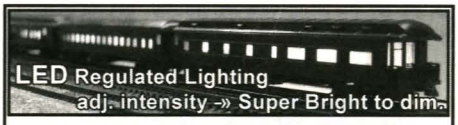

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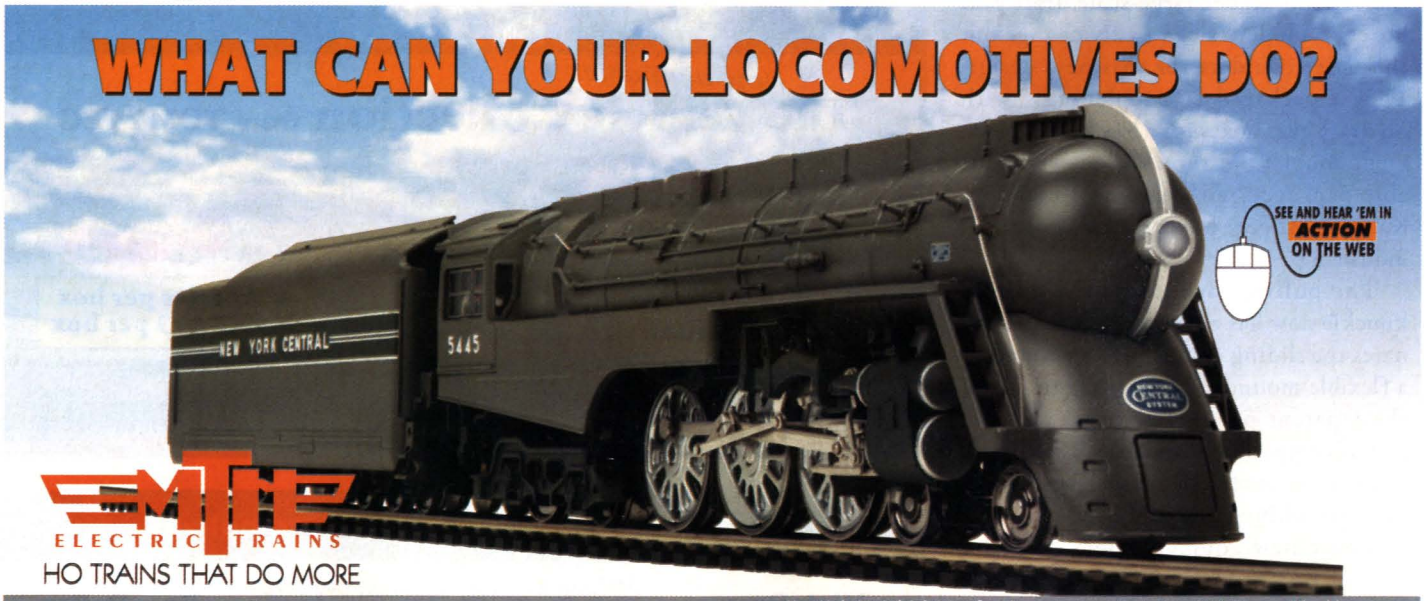

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REVIEW HO

Atlas cleans up! New track cleaning car hits the target!

Review and Photos by John Sipple

HO Track Cleaning Car, MSRP: $109.95
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Here's the whole package, less the packaging. The main car is accompanied by three white cloth pad disks, three black abrasive grit disks, a drag pad with mounting screw, and a tool for removing the vacuum impeller which comes mounted in the car.

ATLAS Model Railroad Co. has imported a track-cleaning car from Dapol, in the United Kingdom. This is a substantially different product from anything else on the market, and it needs to be treated as such. I won't refer to other products by name, since a review is not the time to plug other offerings, but I can't avoid listing some competing concepts. So hang on for a look at a groundbreaking product.

A Historical Look at Track Cleaning in Model Railroading

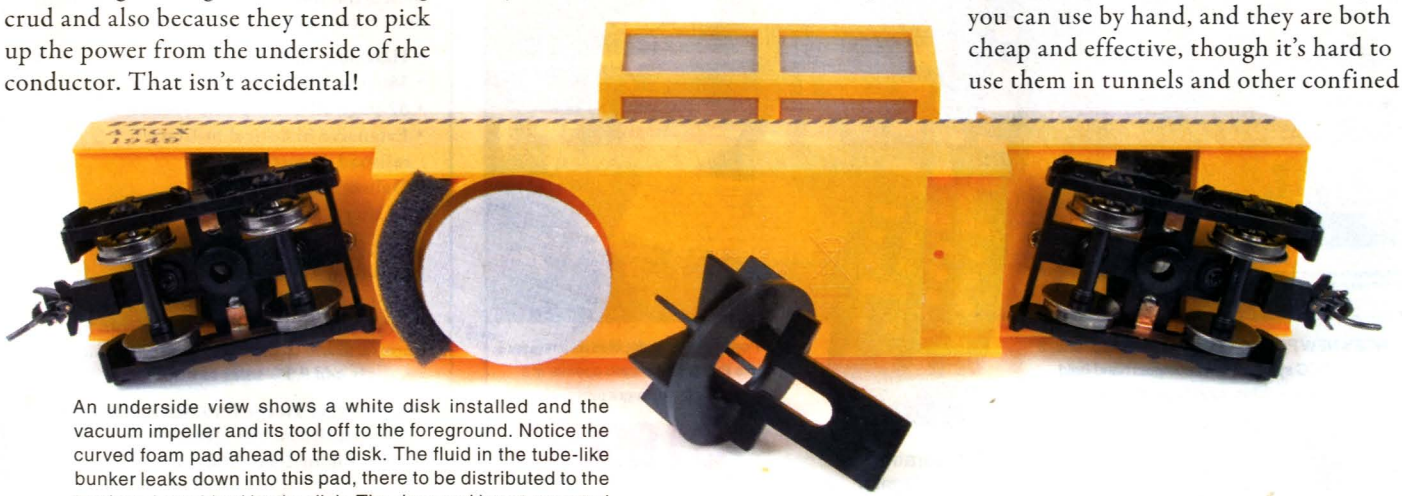
Prototype railroads don't run with power from their tracks in the same way that model railroads do. Overhead wires and third rails don't count, in part due to their high voltage which cuts through crud and also because they tend to pick up the power from the underside of the conductor. That isn't accidental!

Model railroads use low power that is safe for hands. In HO scale, that means a standard top voltage of 16 delivered to the rails. The power is also delivered to wheels on the locomotive from the top of the rails. Thus, settling dust and other substances will naturally coat the top surface of the rail, interfering with pick-up. Whether the voltage is high or low, rolling wheels don't do a lot to knock the dirt off the rails, and so modelers have turned to other solutions.

Back in the fifties, I recall building a flatcar that had a small pad of Masonite spring-loaded to the bottom. I piled weight on the top to keep it firmly on the tracks, and it had Mantua couplers. I'd couple my Varney Docksider 0-4-0T locomotive to it and push it around the layout. I found I also needed to keep the Docksider's four drivers very clean or that would become the major problem. The Masonite pad did a fairly good job of rubbing the top of the rails and getting them clean — for a while.

By the nineties, the drag pad was still popular, but there were also smaller pads that could be fitted onto any car, dragging each pad on its respective rail. I also encountered the "rolling stone" as I like to call it. This is a roller made of surgical sharpening material that rolls along the top of the track but is cocked at a slight angle so it also has a sideways brushing action.

I found that most solutions worked but were essentially passive, meaning they could keep your track clean, but they might have trouble removing stuck-on filth. There are eraser-like pads you can use by hand, and they are both cheap and effective, though it's hard to use them in tunnels and other confined



An underside view shows a white disk installed and the vacuum impeller and its tool off to the foreground. Notice the curved foam pad ahead of the disk. The fluid in the tube-like bunker leaks down into this pad, there to be distributed to the track and scrubbed by the disk. The drag pad is not mounted yet in the location ahead of the right-hand (rear) truck.

areas. Electronic cleaners zap off the dirt, but again, they don't work well with caked-on crud.

At some point, you need some elbow grease, as my dad called it. Using an active cleaner, a rubber eraser tool, and a red shop rag, it would be time to go after the entire layout. I'd spend most of the day scrubbing until I came away with truly clean track and a dirty rag. Of course, some folks want to give up on the entire problem and go to battery power and radio control, but I haven't seen a solution in that direction that I could afford and wanted to use as my main system. What I have always wanted was a track cleaner that got aggressive with my tracks, scrubbing them off and getting them really clean without me having to take down the whole layout and spend the day scouring the rails.

Track Power to the Rescue

Since we have electricity in the rails, and we want to improve electrical performance, why not put that juice to work for us? The Atlas solution has all the tools to do just that. Not only does it offer us a spinning pad to scour the rails, it can also dispense some sort of track cleaning solution onto that spinning pad to assist in the cleaning.

Pads can be changed easily, and the car comes with three soft pads and three abrasive disks. There is also a blower wheel that turns the pad area into a vacuum cleaner. What looks to be a cab in the car is actually the dustbin with

The screen housing is inverted on the outside, and you can see the vent from the impeller. It can spin in either direction, creating a vacuum, and the detritus removed ends up in the compartment. You may then empty this compartment. If it turns out to be mostly ballast, you can then recycle it.

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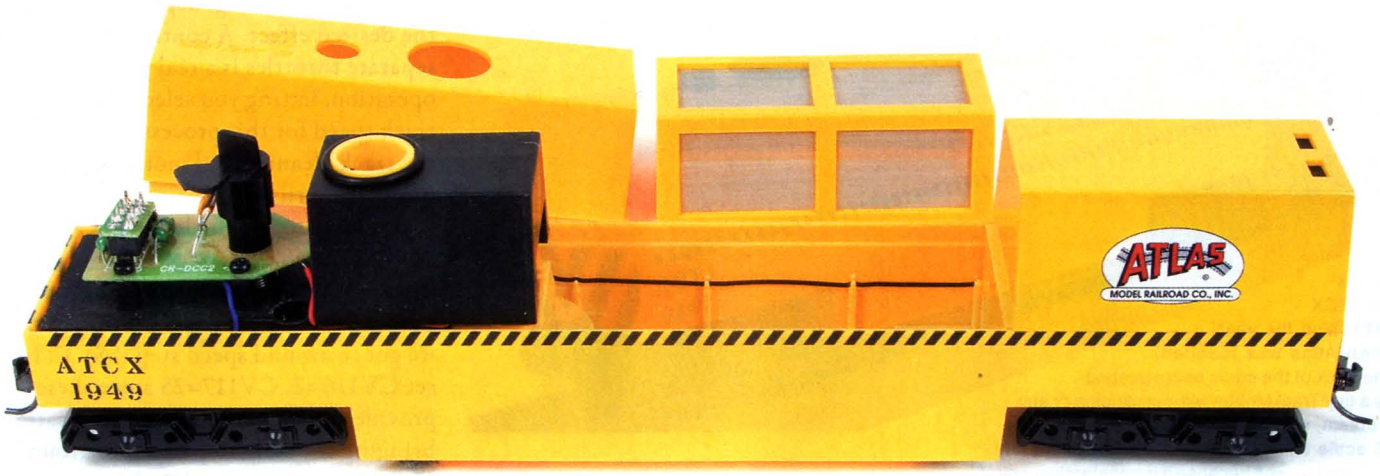

Take a look at the front compartment with its shell removed. From the left we find the DCC socket with its dummy plug installed. Next is the three-position rotary power switch with "CL," "On," and "Off" positions. The black box houses the motor and the yellow fluid tube for plastic-safe fluid. The CL position is only for occasional and short use.

screened sides and top to let the vacuum breathe freely. We also have a vertical tube with a weighted seep valve at the bottom and a large, black plug in the top. This is our cleaning fluid reservoir.

The rotating cleaning pads use a spring-loaded system to press down and stay flexible to the contours of the rail. There is a curved sponge pad to apply the fluid, located in front of the rotating disk, and it's also there when using the vacuum tool. The system contains a single motor that only rotates the disks or vacuum impeller, whichever is installed. The motor doesn't propel the car, so a locomotive must be used with it. There is also a user-installed drag pad just ahead of the rear truck.

DC Power First

Controlling the speed of the motor depends upon your choice of track power. Regular DC works just fine right out of the box. It doesn't start turning until we reach enough voltage to make it rotate; then the more voltage we add, the faster it turns. Since this same voltage is also operating your locomotive, it would be good to match the Track Cleaner with the loco, in terms of starting voltage.

To push the Track Cleaner, I selected the loco that was least powerful and most affected by dirt. The little TrackMobile (TM) is your basic 0-4-0 arrangement, very small and light, and

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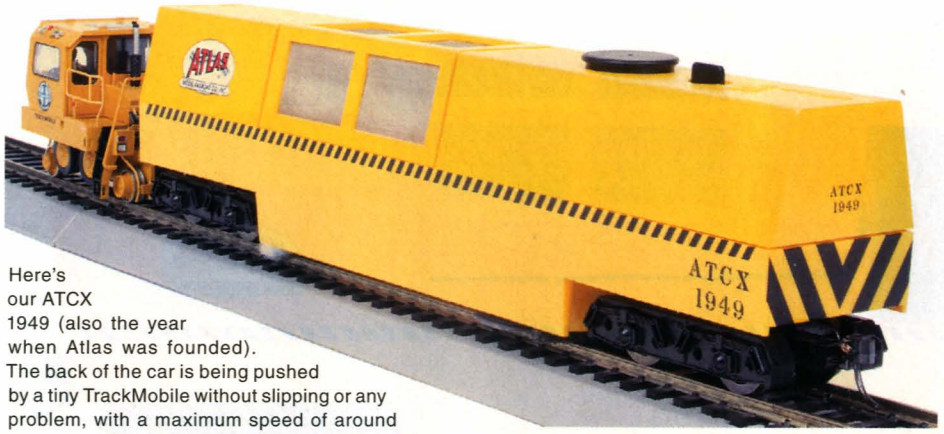

Here's our ATCX 1949 (also the year when Atlas was founded). The back of the car is being pushed by a tiny TrackMobile without slipping or any problem, with a maximum speed of around 25 scale miles per hour. The lucky little TM performs so well because it is constantly running on freshly cleaned track!

if it could shove this big car around, anything else could. The TrackMobile has a built-in NCE decoder, but operates quite well on regular DC. The TM liked this work since as it pushed, it was constantly on clean track. It also found the Track Cleaner to be an easy roller. The TM started at just under 10 volts, about where the Track Cleaner's disk started to spin, so the two of them got on famously.

DCC Ready

Converting to DCC is a very interesting business. If we consider the motor switch and the fluid tank as being in the front, then we remove that shell, and find the NMRA 8-pin decoder socket. Any motor decoder will function just fine, but special emphasis should be given to silent decoders, since the motor operation can become quickly annoying when the silent running feature is off.

If you install your decoder and then call up Address 03 on your system, you can now control the speed of the pad/vacuum motor from your DCC throttle. You might run it at full speed when the vacuum is on and at a slower speed when the pads are turning, depending upon the desired effect. A controller with two separate throttles is a real plus in this operation, letting you select the desired track speed for this process and then run the track cleaning pad motor at the appropriate turn rate.

In the space available, I stuck in an NCE D14SR "postage stamp" type decoder. Right out of the package, the decoder didn't get the pad turning until we got to around speed step (SS) 37. I set CV116=2, CV117=25 since these provide additional torque compensation, bringing the start step down to around 21. From there, I set CV2=70 and got the motor to start turning around SS 2. I kept wishing there was a light, since headlights are very diagnostic.

In Use

The car body itself is eight inches long, which translates into 58 scale feet long between the strikers. Add couplers and it's something over sixty feet between pulling faces. If you look at the variety of wheeled gizmos pulled around in Maintenance Of Way (MOW) consists, this isn't so very odd. MOW cars take a form that suits the function, and the same is true here.

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Once I removed the front shell, I found that I could set it back in place, put on the fluid tank lid, and that would hold it down well enough that I didn't need to reinstall the screws. This lets me get inside as needed, and I found that after some use, the track dirt got mixed with the cleaner and spread around the track cleaner car. It's a good thing I photographed it before I ran it, because this puppy gets quite dirty. Cleaning the car is far easier than hand cleaning the track!

Adding weight to the car really won't change anything, aside from pulling requirements. The couplers are truck mounted, and the trucks are four wheelers that swing on the inside axle, letting the car negotiate 18-inch radius track. The couplers extend from an NEM socket, but they feature a standard magnetic knuckle coupler at the right height. The wheels are in gauge and the car fits a Plate C profile.

The only problem I had with the car wasn't the fault of the car. I have a number of switches that have no switch motors or throws at all, and the spinning disk may reset their points so the car splits the switch. When I pinned down the switch throw, I had no trouble. Both trucks pick up power on all wheels, a good design feature. Changing direction under DC or DCC will spin the disk the opposite way. The centrifugal impeller of the vacuum wheel gives the same airflow, regardless of direction.

I would suggest that the new owner explore the product "dry" first. Get the decoder in and all the settings made, decide what type of wheel you wish to spin, and only then should you put fluid in the chamber. Don't start by filling the chamber because all that fluid is going to come out over the next few minutes. Better to put a half eyedropper in at a time. A little will go a long way, and when the pad seems dry, just add a little more.

Effective Track Cleaning

Leave it to Atlas, perhaps the foremost purveyor of track equipment and supplies, to release this track-cleaning accessory to the HO world. They produce an N-scale version, though I didn't get a sample to explore. According to their web site, this smaller track cleaner is only available with Rapido couplers. What's up with that?

Meanwhile, HO- and N-scalers now have an aggressive cleaning solution to improve their track maintenance regimens. They mention "proprietary" cleaning solution but don't specify which. Dapol produces a track cleaning liquid but doesn't specify the ingredients, and without a proper MSDS, I wouldn't dream of publishing an endorsement of it. I made up my own proprietary mix of mainly water with a dash of rubbing alcohol and a bit of dish detergent. Whatever fluid you use with the soft disks, they will probably be your most common application. The abrasive disks would only be for occasional use. The vacuum may pick up loose ballast, whether you want it removed or not, so use it with care.

Finally, the Track Cleaner has a CL switch position for higher level cleaning, something to be used sparingly and for only short periods of time. Frankly, I've never had any reason to use it so far. However, it is thoughtful of Dapol and Atlas to make it available. In fact, that statement holds true of the Track Cleaning Car in general. Considering their sixty years of experience, Atlas really does know track!

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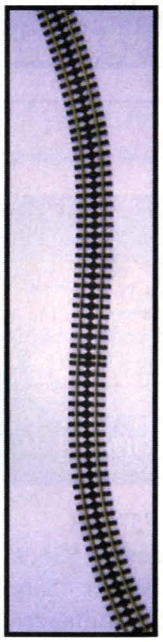

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New Tech 6 controller from MRC

DC & DCC — Model Rectifier Corporation has released the Tech 6 which combines the company's power pack technology, reliability, and control, with the "BlackBox." Operate either Analog DC/Blue Line locomotives, or fully functional dual-mode sound-decoder equipped locomotives, or any DCC decoder-equipped locomotive. Two versions are available: the 2-amp capacity for HO-scale and the 6-amp capacity for O scale. The mode switch selects between analog DC and BlackBox technology. It features smooth linear motor control in either mode, full 28 NMRA functionality allows access to what the locomotives offer, and optional (future) walk around capability using MRC's plug 'n play technology. The Tech 6, 2 amp controller, (#0001200) retails for $109.98 and the 6 amp (#0001201) retails for $269.98.

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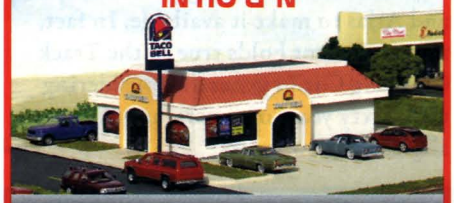

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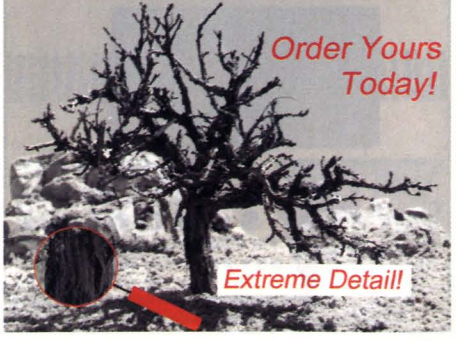

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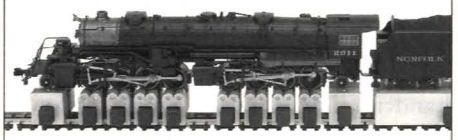

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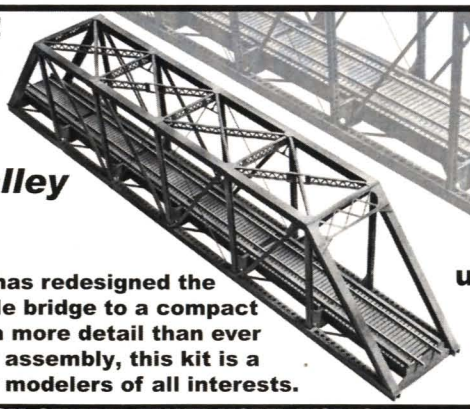

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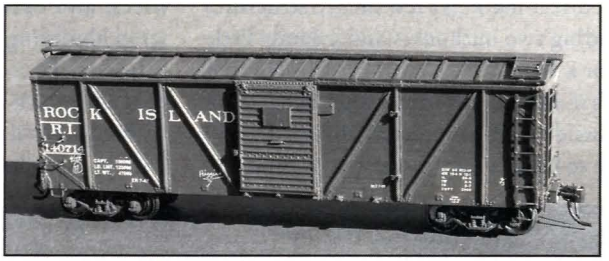

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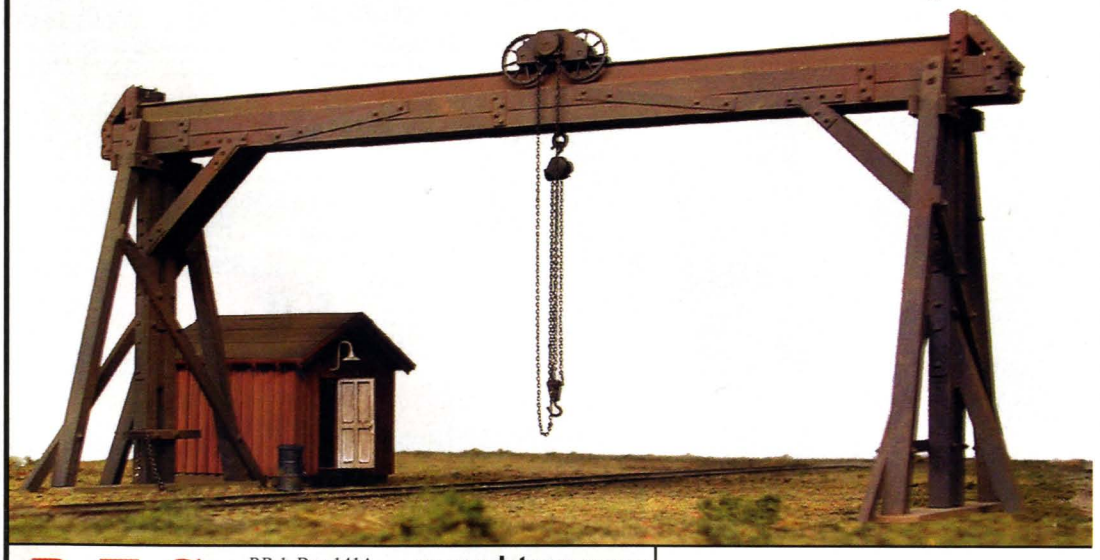
"McCabe Rail Facility" is the next project for the McCabe Lumber Company series of craftsman kits. Like the sawmill complex, the Rail Facility will be offered in individual kits so you can pick and choose what you need for your layout. Some of these kits will be offered in both **standard gauge** and **narrow gauge versions,** but most kits will work for either. In addition to the Engine House, Car Repair Shop, Shop Water Tank, and Timber Gantry, there will soon be a Locomotive Water Tank, Oil Tank, Sand House & Tower, Machine Shop, Blacksmith Shop, Rail Facility Office, Derelict Shay, and Speeder Shed.

McCabe Timber Gantry



The next component of the McCabe Rail Facility is the Timber Gantry. Used to unload parts and machinery, or lift a car for repair, the gantry spans two tracks. Overall footprint is about a scale 35' x 65' including the tool shed. Clearance inside the gantry is a scale 23' high and 48' wide.

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So What Else Is There?

CURVES
FOR AND ABOUT S-GAUGE MODEL RAILROADING
A column by Dick Karnes

PLENTY, that's what. This month we'll look at a small sampling. **Clever Models** offers a fairly extensive line of easy-to-assemble cardstock models in all the major scales including S. One of my favorites is their Quonset hut, Kit No. 1210. Photo 1 shows it in a refinery setting on my NYW&B. The kit comes with several optional features including a second dormer that I didn't use. I opted for the partially rusted finish; the kit is also available in an unrusted (new) finish.

Mullet River Model Works produces a line of laser-cut S-scale caboose kits for **Des Plaines Hobbies**. Additionally, Mullet River direct-markets a few small S structures including two outhouses and a dandy little kit for a New York Central crossing watchman's shanty. The shanty is supposed to have its outside walls completely shingled, but I chose to build a shiplap version by omitting the wall shingles. Photo 2 shows the shanty as I built it.

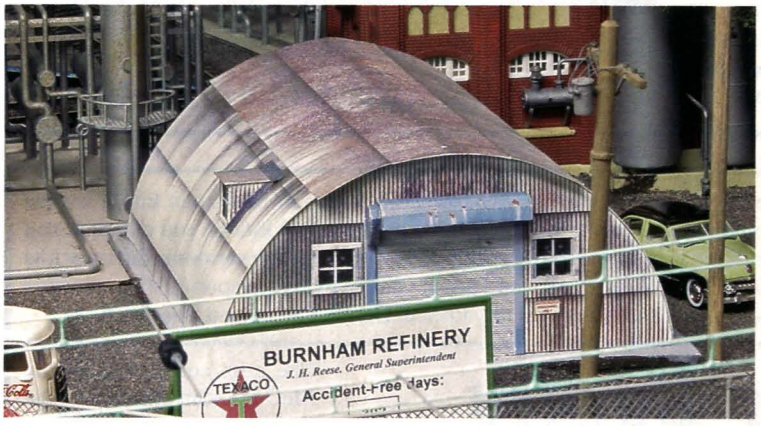
Also shown in Photo 2 is a No. 4095 **NJ International** crossing flasher and a pair of **Lehigh Valley Models** No. LVM5 crossing gates. NJI's products come assembled with LEDs; the LVM products are easy-to-build kits. If you don't want to build, NJI also carries ready-to-install crossing gates in both red-and-white and black-and-white versions.

As most of you who read this column already know, I am a juice fan. I love **Model Memories'** products. In particular, I use their catenary poles and bridges, their span wires, and extra bases and rain caps for scratchbuilding my own multi-track catenary bridges. Photo 3 shows a Model Memories pole with stack span wires attached.

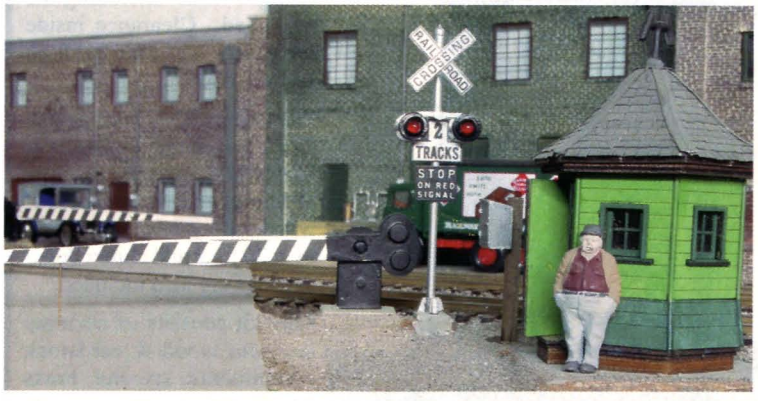
Banta Modelworks has a nifty kit, No. T-2221, for a handcar. It makes up into either a standard gauge or three-foot gauge handcar. The standard gauge version is shown in Photo 4.

The variety of 1:64 scale non-rail equipment is actually quite large and varied. Check "S" out on the S Scale Model Railroading web site at www.trainweb.org/crocon/sscale.html to find out more!

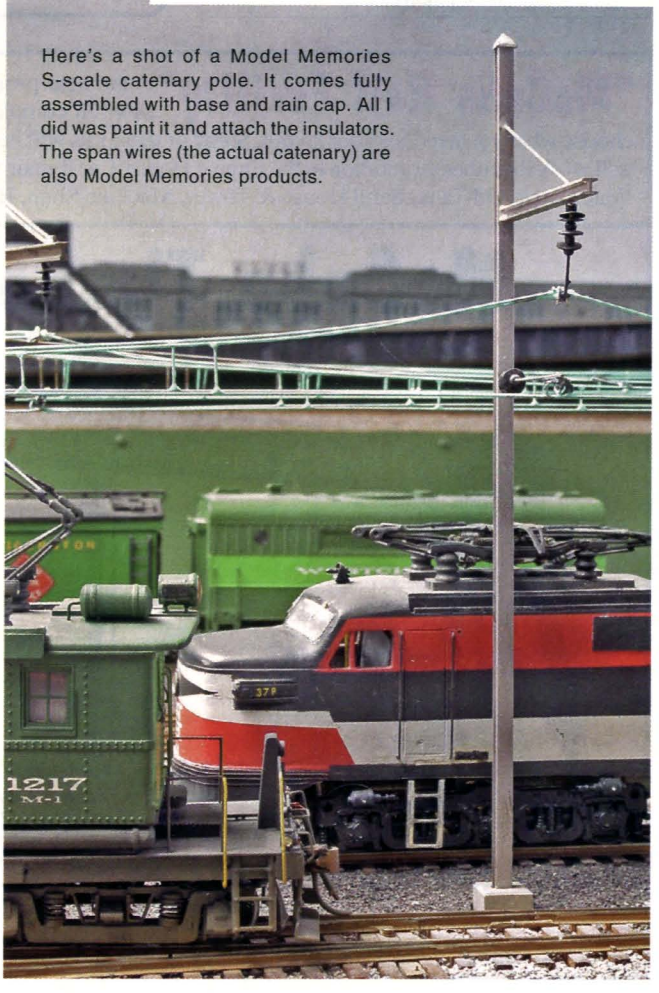
This cute little handcar was built from a Banta kit. Some of the parts are extremely small, so construction takes some care. Care is required in handling too, as evidenced by my lack of same – Note the right-hand wheel rim!



Clever Models' S-scale Quonset hut kit is the focal point of this Texaco refinery scene on my NYW&B. Background structures are from Kibri and Walthers (HO); the Ford is a Racing Champions 1:64 model. General Super J. H. Reese (on the billboard) was actually my boss at my first real engineering job at the Eagle Point (NJ) Texaco Refinery in 1961.



This scene at North Cornwall shows off the Mullet River crossing shanty, the NJ International crossing flasher, and Lehigh Valley Models' crossing gates. The phone box is a BTS detail item, and the brick buildings in the background are Pine Canyon Scale Models kits. Pine Canyon has changed ownership and is now back in business. Watch "S Curves" for an announcement.



Here's a shot of a Model Memories S-scale catenary pole. It comes fully assembled with base and rain cap. All I did was paint it and attach the insulators. The span wires (the actual catenary) are also Model Memories products.

Feel free to e-mail any comments or questions about S scale in general to scurves@modelrailroadnews.com or snail-mail them to S-Curves, Model Railroad News, P.O. Box 1080, Merlin, OR 97532-1080. Suggestions, contributions, and announcements are all welcome.

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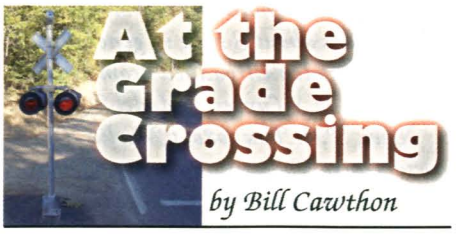

by Bill Cawthon

"I'M SO EXCITED," sang the Pointer Sisters in 1982 and I can't help but share the feeling. After a long dry spell, we're getting some new diecast American passenger cars from **Model Power**, **Classic Metal Works**, and **M2Machines**. What makes it even more exciting is the fact the new products cover three scales: N, HO, and S.

Model Power Minis

Model Power and **High Speed** have worked out their differences and Matthew Tager and his team are delivering new models that should be in hobby shops by the time you read this.

Just in time for this month's issue, I received some approval samples of the 1970 Plymouth Hemi 'Cuda, one of the legendary Detroit muscle cars. The prototype Hemi 'Cuda was rare: out of 48,867 Plymouth Barracudas built in the 1970 model year, just 666 were equipped with the 426 Hemi engine and 14 of those were convertibles. More than two-and-a-half times as many 'Cudas were sold with the 440 Wedge Six-Pack. Back in the Muscle Car days, a Hemi 'Cuda, complete with shaker hood, went out the door for less than $5,000.00, today a fully restored 'Cuda can bring millions at auction.

The Model Power samples came in Vitamin C orange and In-Violet purple, both of which were extra-cost finishes on the real car. There is a third color that I've seen only in photos, which looks to be Rallye Red. The models have the "shaker" hood, road lights under the front bumper, and "HEMI" side striping. Checking with the calipers, the Model Power 'Cuda is within a scale inch of factory specs on length and height, but a couple scale inches wider than exact HO scale.

These are approval samples of the new 1970 Plymouth Hemi 'Cuda that will be joining the Model Power Minis line this fall. They are the first of three new models that should be arriving in hobby shops about the time this issue of *MRN* arrives. Please note these are pre-production models and the final product may vary in some details. *Model Railroad News* photo.

M2 Machines is offering this 1967 Chevy II Nova Super Sport. The model comes with all the fine detail and operating features S scalers have come to expect from this exceptional line of diecast vehicle models. *Model Railroad News* photo.

The paint and print are very good; High Speed is still one of the top diecast houses in the world.

On to the nits: Biggest boo-boo is the wheels. Don't get me wrong, the wheels on the model are very nice; they're just incorrect. The 1970 Hemi Barracuda came with F60 x 15-inch tires on the 15x7 Rallye Wheels; the Road Wheels on the Model Power version were available only in 14-inch. I must say the Model Power wheels are so nice that I see a number of extra sales where the model is cannibalized for the wheels. The slatted rear window and rear deck spoiler look neat but I wasn't able to find a source that said they were Chrysler factory options (however, they may have been dealer-installed options). Missing are the hood tiedown pins that were standard on all 'Cudas. I don't expect the actual cables but the plates are certainly large enough to be replicated in HO scale. Also there is a small silver stripe on each front fender: in reality that is a side marker reflector/lamp and should be amber. A little dab of Tamiya or Testors transparent amber will take care of that issue.

Nits aside, these are really nice replicas and they will look great on any layout set from 1970 to modern times.

Model Power is also releasing a 1956 Lincoln Mark II Continental Coupe in three colors. This is the legendary Lincoln that was the most expensive American production car of its day. Even 53 years later, it's still a beautiful car.

Three on the way from Classic Metal Works

Classic Metal Works will be shipping its 1950 Dodge Meadowbrook sedan in both HO and N scales. There wasn't time to get samples for examination, but we did get photos of the actual models and they look great. The Meadowbrook was the base model for Dodge from 1949 to 1954 and was offered only as a four-door sedan. CMW is producing the models in four

Classic Metal Works didn't have time to supply actual samples of the new 1950 Dodge Meadowbrook, but these photos of pre-production HO and N models tell us the real thing is going to be nice. Photo courtesy of CMW Holdings.

colors and as a Yellow Cab. As was true of the Ford F-350, the CMW Dodge will have a plastic body and a diecast chassis. I am looking forward to doing a full review of both scales in the near future.

CMW is also going to have two more new models in the near future: a 1953 Ford Crestline Country Squire station wagon and a 1956 Dodge 4-door sedan in both Royal and Coronet trim levels. The word is the Ford will hit early next year followed by the Dodge later in the spring. The station wagon will be almost a must-have for any layout set in the early to late 1950s. Ford sold 11,001 Crestline Country Squires, its top-of-the-line wagon, in 1953. I will be interested to see whether or not CMW molds the woodside trim. If it's just printed, there's a chance the model could be released as a Customline Country Sedan wagon, which also had four doors. The base model, the Mainline Ranch Wagon, was offered only as a two-door model. I would like to see the Country Sedan as station wagons were often used for MOW work.

Sleeper Chevy from Castline

New in S scale is the 1967 Chevy II Nova Super Sport from **M2 Machines**. It's one of the Detroit Muscle series. The Chevy isn't one of the first cars that comes to mind when one thinks of muscle cars, but the car could be ordered with a 327 CID V-8 engine that pumped out 275 horsepower and there were a few equipped with the L79 version that had a whopping 350 horsepower, a street race sleeper, for sure. The L79 could propel the Nova SS to 60 in just 6.5 seconds (a good time for those days) and would do the quarter-mile in 14.9 seconds at 96.5 miles per hour.

Like the other models in the M2 Machines line, the Nova is well detailed with opening doors and a hood the can be raised to show off the big red engine underneath. The folks at Castline do their homework very well and it shows in their models. If you're an S scaler modeling the 50s and 60s and you don't have some of the M2 Machines on your layout, you're missing out on some of the finest vehicle models available in your scale.

There's more news coming, iHobby Expo should be just a few weeks away when you get this issue, so stay tuned and I will see you next month at the grade crossing.

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I do enjoy hearing from you and comments and corrections are always welcome. You can send an e-mail to: Gradecrossing@modelrailroadnews.com or snail-mail an actual letter to Grade Crossing, Model Railroad News, P.O. Box 1080, Merlin, OR 97532-1080.

Mentioned in this column:

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HO-scale ready-to-run diecast vehicle models

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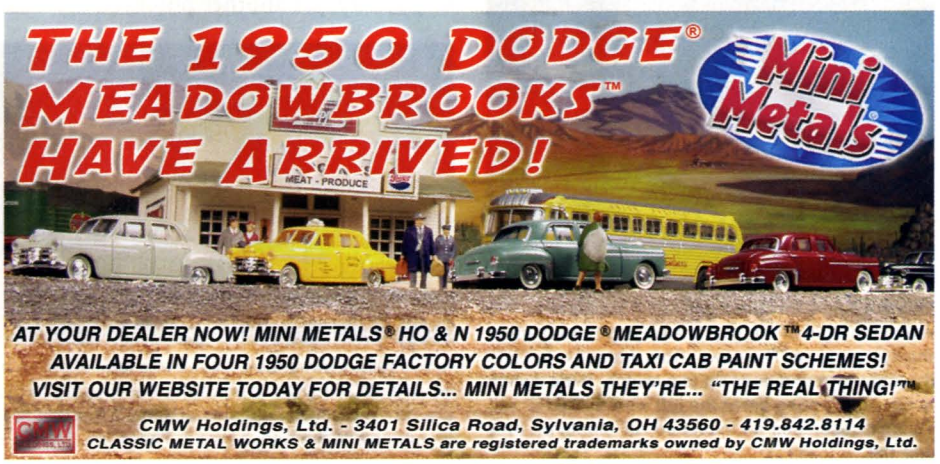
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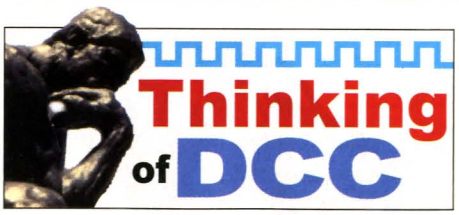
Can DCC benefit from block wiring?



By John Sipple

THAT'S our question for this month, and just to be clear, let's define our terms. A "district" is an area of a DCC layout that is electrically isolated by double jumper gaps and is powered separately by a separate booster or circuit breaker, even if it uses the same command station. Districts let us add more power without raising the amperage more than is really safe. Basically, any time you find yourself needing more than five amps in a given location on an HO layout, you should consider going to multiple districts.

As trains go from one district to the next, they take their power demands with them. So long as the polarity across the rail gaps is the same, it all acts like one big layout, and you don't have to throw any switches. Most home layouts don't need districts, and most club layouts do, if that gives you any idea.

Then what is a "block," and why is the word "wiring" used with it? In railroading, a block is an area controlled by a signal, such as both tracks in a siding area or a distance of a few miles on the mainline. When I broke into DC model railroading as an elementary school kid back in the early fifties, block wiring was already in flower and remains very much so today. Most model railroads are DC track-power, so most of them use sections of track that are powered separately from the rest.

As a rule, a DC modeler will build several layouts before he finally learns how to plan a DC layout's blocks and wiring. Yes, railroad block concepts are employed, but this is also a testament to the fact that if your model railroad was just one, big block, then all the locomotives would move the same direction at the same time! Synchronized swimming is lovely for the Olympics; it's dreadful for layout operation.

Long before DCC was a gleam in the eye of Bernd Lenz, DC track-power used clever arrangements of switches to power or unpower some segment of track. In a yard, it was common for each switching spur to be its own block. You could roll a loco down onto that spur and then shut it off, isolating the loco until you wanted to use it.

As a rule, most blocks were not double-gapped, since if you switched one-rail dead, the circuit was open for that locomotive. As a result, I have seen lots of DC control panels with a dozen or more small, single pole, single throw (SPST) switches. I saw sidings that had a gap in the same rail at both ends, and the whole thing was controlled by a single SPST switch.

Some guys set up their layouts with bunches of double pole, double throw, center off (DPDTCO) switches because they had two power packs with two throttles. The double pole switch was required because full gapping of both rails was mandatory. Two throttles couldn't share the same rail. When the switch was thrown in one direction, that block was controlled by Cab A. When thrown the other direction, it was controlled by Cab B. Meanwhile, it passed through the center off position which further isolated the cabs from each other.

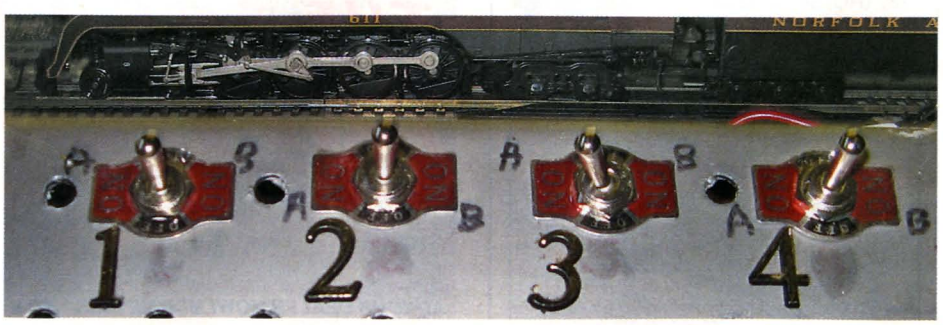
As a process, both methods worked, depending on what you wanted to do. However, it took some intense concentration to be sure you flipped the correct switch the correct direction at the correct time. I've seen the DPDT switch concept used to create blocks that could be reversed in polarity, yet another potential use of a DPDT switch, though you had to decide up front how you wanted that switch wired.

Fast forward to the days of DCC. What value does block wiring play in DCC? First, give up the notion of operating blocks by isolating them electrically. One of the main values of DCC is that you don't need dozens of blocks to regulate speed and direction of a loco compared to all the rest. Just select the address of a certain locomotive and operate it while the rest wait their turn.

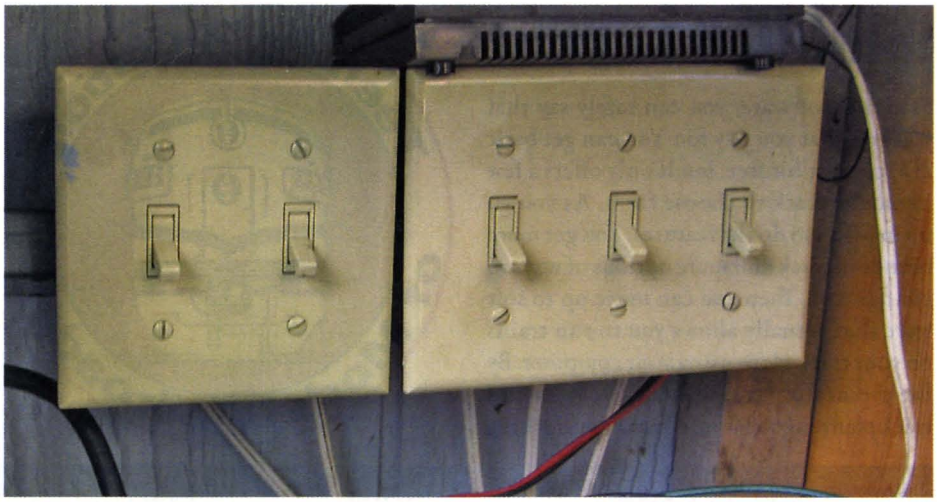
Then why bother with blocks at all? Well, they can have their value under specific situations. The first that comes to mind is the programming track. Suppose you set up a specific spurline to be your program track. It will be completely isolated by a double gap just past the switch into it. The wires from this isolated track will then feed into the center terminals of a DPDTCO switch. When you throw the switch one way, it jumps the track power of the adjacent track into the program track, letting you operate the locomotive with your regular throttle. Once you have it parked, you can throw the switch the other way and the track is now connected to the programming terminals of your control station. You also have a center off that lets you completely unpower that track, very useful for railing a loco.

Railing up a locomotive under DCC should really be done on a dead track. On my HO layout that powered track has a standing 16 volts at 5 amps all ready and waiting. While it's generally safe, you can

This is a single insulated gap out in the garden. The rail to the right of the gap is always powered when the system is on. The power from that rail is fed into the right wire and goes up to a switch. If the switch is on, power goes down the left wire to the left rail. This process uses an insulated rail clamp on only one rail.



In this photo, switches 1 – 4 out of a total of seven are shown. 1 – 6 controls HO tracks, while (7) regulates whether DC or DCC is powering the N-scale tracks. In this photo, only (3) is turned on to DCC; the rest are off. The control panel is actually a section of vinyl eaves trough inverted, and you can see a steam locomotive in the dark beyond. These are Double-Pole, Double-Throw, Center-Off (DPDTCO) switches.



These are standard wall switches that are certainly cheap enough. They are actually installed in a cabinet, out of the weather, and they still work fine after several years. You can see the feeder wires coming up to each switch from each gap.

get bit enough to find it uncomfortable. There's also the danger of creating a sort of bizarre short of the sort that only happens while railing up a loco. Especially steam, though we can't leave out diesels or electrics. Your booster should be fairly well protected against shorts, but your loco may not be so lucky.

Outdoors in the garden, I'm running 22 volts at 13 amps. Since that's enough for some low-level welding, it's nothing to be taken lightly. I wouldn't dream of railing a large-scale loco on a track carrying that sort of power in either DC or DCC. I have five-yard spurs at one end of the layout and three at the other, each one controlled by a switch. I can turn any one of them on or off with the flick of a switch. Again, why bother?

On my HO, N, and Large Scale layouts, I test locomotives and rolling stock. Readers have said conclusively that they want DC, DCC, and any other sort of control tested and reported to them. Out in the garden, I have to evaluate not only regular DC track control, some of our test samples either have DCC built in or added. Recently, I tested Aristo's Revolution DC-Radio Control system that can handle track or battery power.

On the HO and N layouts, I have several DCC systems, a couple of DC cabs, and a DCS Commander from Mike's Train House. I don't know how much of this you'd care to duplicate, but I can tell you that it isn't good to park DC locomotives on tracks live with DCC power. The Revolution power has the potential of looking like full-throttle DC when applied to a DCC or a straight DC loco, so locos equipped in that manner need to be parked off-line. The same is true of the various forms of power inside on HO and N.

So is there a use for block wiring on a DCC layout? You betcha!

—

If you have questions, answers, suggestions, tips, or comments about DCC and the topic in this column, email me at: dcc@modelrailroadnews.com or send a letter to: DCC, c/o Model Railroad News, P.O. Box 1080, Merlin, OR 97532-1080

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Designing and Planning a Layout

By Jeffrey Andreski

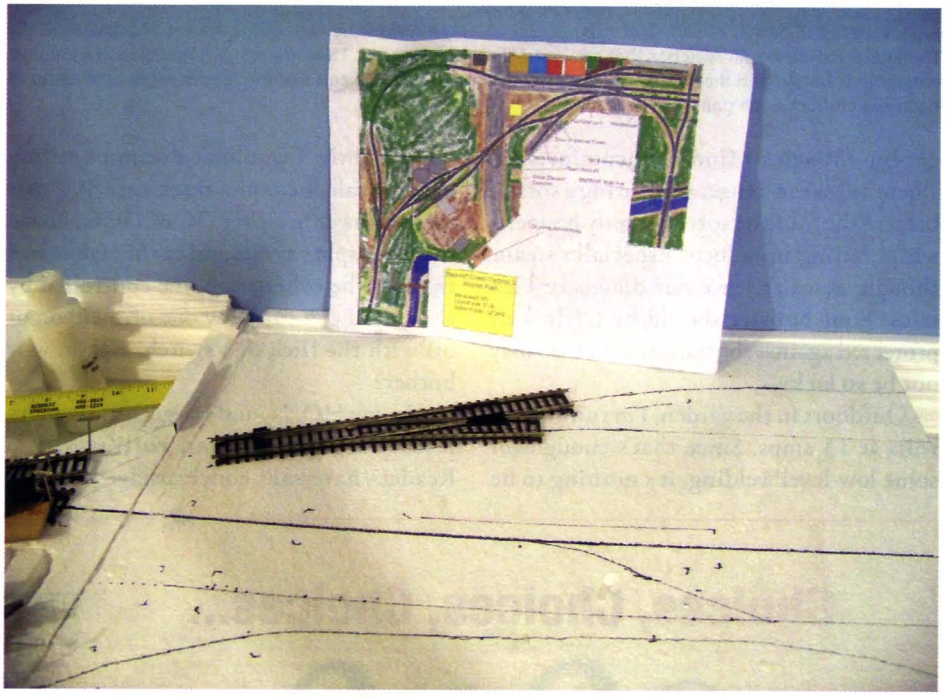
STARTING a new model railroad layout is a great experience, but before you even think about starting a layout, you need to have a plan. Some modelers just like to start building with little or no planning. While this may sound good, you are almost guaranteed to have a layout that you will be unhappy with. Then there are many "armchair modelers," who just think about building a layout or may make sketches or drawings depicting what they would like to accomplish, if they ever get a chance to build a layout. I am glad to say that I am neither one of these.

Right now, I am in the process of getting track laid on several modules of my layout. It's going very smoothly, or as good as I can expect. What do I mean by the last statement? Even with the most careful and detailed planning you will always have unexpected problems that will arise. I don't think I could have gotten as far along with my layout without the extensive planning that I did.

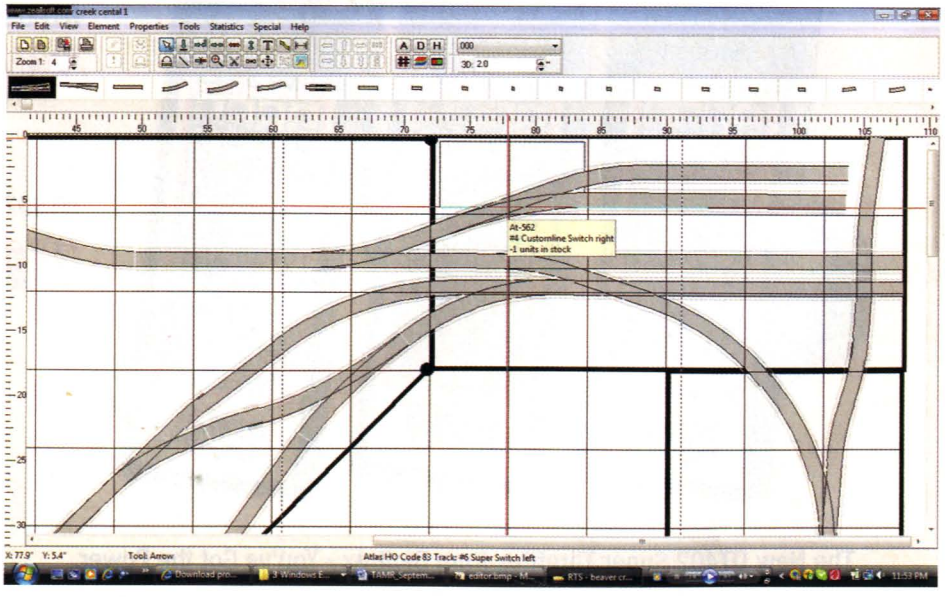
Two Ways to Plan

Now I will discuss two ways that you can use to design your track plan. The first way you can make a plan is the old and time-tested way of using a paper and pencil. There is not much to be explained about this method except that you use graph paper, a ruler, and a compass to draw your track plan. I originally used this method for my master track plan. It turned out OK. For me, paper track plans are only useful for giving you a general idea of what you want. Because your hand can only be so accurate, it is not possible for hand drawn plans to give you accurate measurements for actually building your layout from it. There are a few pros and cons on this method. Pros: It is a fast way to make a plan with free flowing track. It is very easy to make changes. Cons: It can't be used as an accurate measurement for planning track. It can only give you an idea. Paper is paper, which means that it will rip or tear and can get lost very easily.

The second way, my preferred way, that you can make a plan is by using digital track plans. Digital track plans have been around for years, but they have only recently become widely used. There are many software programs developed for track planning. They range in price from free to $150. With track planning software, you can safely say that you get what you pay for. You can get basic 2D software for free, but it only offers a few brands of track to choose from. As you go up in price, so do the features. You get more brands of track and more options of ways to configure it. Then you can move up to software that actually allows you to run trains on your track plans using your computer. By far the neatest thing about the high-end track planning software is having everything



I'm working on drawing the track's center line on the layout base. I have a copy of my plan in front of me for reference, and my laptop is nearby. I use it for additional reference, such as what type of turnout should be used in the location shown.



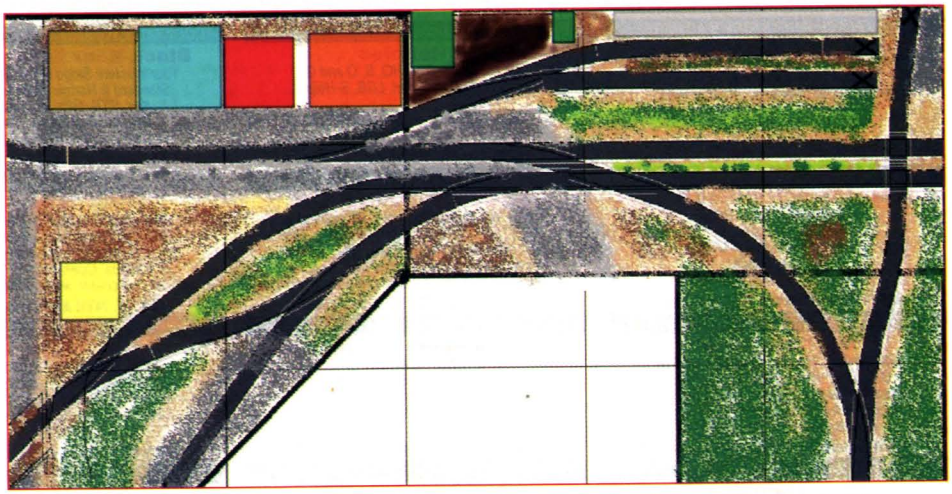
This is a view of what the software screen looks like. All the tools you can use are at the top of the screen. Some of the elements of designing the track can take some time to learn to use proficiently. Conveniently, you can simply put your mouse over a given piece of track and see what type and item number it is.

in 3D. The software scenery looks exactly like what your finished dream layout will look like, if (or when) it gets finished. But 3D software, with trains running through tunnels and between trees, comes with a price. The cost runs about $100 to $150 for a copy. But if you are willing to spend the money, the results are well worth it. You can always print out your digital plan onto paper. This allows you to reference your plan and have it next to you while you work. You can also print various versions from different angles and zoom levels.

My Planning Experience

Being a teen model railroader on a budget, I don't really have the option to go out and spend money on fancy track planning software. For my new 8-foot x 9-foot layout, I originally designed my plan on a couple sheets of graph paper. From there, I transferred my ideas to software. I decided to use Atlas's RTS 8.0 freeware software. It's a basic 2D program with nothing fancy, but it does what it's supposed to do. It designs a track plan. One downfall of the software is that you can only use Atlas's code 83 and 100 track. Since I am using their code 83 track, the software works perfectly for me. (A note on track: When using a brand of track, I only use the turnouts and special track work. Everything else is flex track. Track planning with flex track can be a bit tedious at times as you try to make it do what you want.) When building your layout, it is very helpful to have your track plan in a digital format. As long as you don't overestimate the actual space that you have and you use the manufacturer's track, digital plans eliminate the common problem of track taking up more space than you intended. Another great thing that I like about using a digital plan is being able to open up the plan on my laptop and look at what type of turnout goes in a specific location. By comparison, when you look at the paper plan, you often can't distinguish a No. 4 from a No. 6 turnout or what radius there is on a curve.

After designing my track plan, I decided to overlay scenery and infrastructure onto it. It gives me a reference to look at when I am building, and it allows others to see what the layout will probably look like when completed. While basic software does not have 3D scenery capability like more elaborate software, you can achieve good results. By exporting an image from the software (press the Print Screen key while the program is open and Paste the image into an editor), you can paint or draw your scenery using some basic colors. For my plan, I mainly used Windows Paint, which comes standard with most PCs. I could have achieved better results if I had used more advanced photo software, but I didn't want to spend the extra time associated with doing that. There really is no reason to do more than that, unless having a very detailed track plan is important to you.



This is what you can do when you add some color to your plan. You can clearly define the roads, buildings, and scenery. By having a printout of your plan, you can show people exactly what you hope to accomplish in building your layout. In parts of your layout that have hills or mountains (not shown in the photo) you can draw lines to depict changes in elevation.

Get Planning!

In conclusion, one of the most important aspects of building a successful layout is planning. You should not pass up the opportunity to do it right. Everyone plans for a different type of railroad, so I can't tell you how to plan it. Put your rough ideas on paper if you wish, then pick a software package that matches your budget and needs, and plan away. The best way to help you succeed is to go digital and plan your track using a computer. And be sure to have fun doing so!

—

If you have any questions, comments, tips, or suggestions concerning this column or model railroading in general, send them to: The Future of Model Railroading, c/o Model Railroad News, P.O. Box 1080, Merlin, OR 97532-1080 or e-mail to: tamr@modelrailroadnews.com

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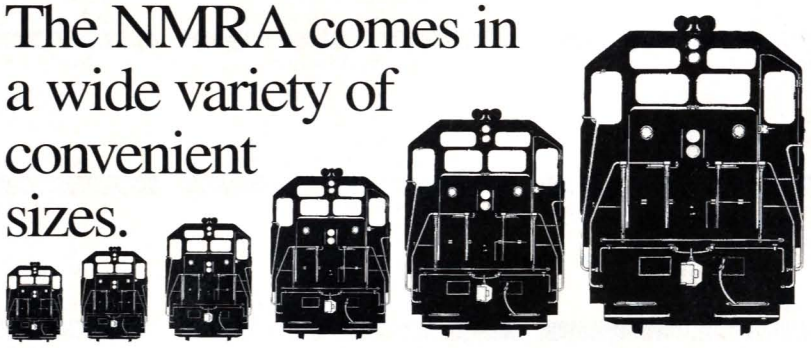

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Events for the December 2009 issue must be received by October 16th, 2009

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Free trial subscription cards of Model Railroad News are available upon request for show and meet attendees. Call, fax, or e-mail for details.

Events & Activities can be viewed online at www.ModelRailroadNews.com

Arizona, Phoenix — The "In the Heat" Railroad Swap Meet will be held on November 7th, at the North Phoenix Baptist Church Fellowship Center, 5757 N. Central Avenue. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Attractions to include all gauges, books, tapes, memorabilia, and accessories. Refreshments will be available on premises. Admission: $5.00, adults. For more information, contact: David Jerry, (602) 361-0356.

California, Antioch — The Black Diamond Lines will be hosting their Fall Show on October 24-25, and on October 31-November 1st, at the Antioch Model Railroad Club, 425 Fulton Shipyard Road. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Attractions to include the BDL 1,500 square foot HO layout featuring rural and urban scenery. For more information, call: (925) 779-1964; or visit: www.blackdiamondlines.org

California, Riverside — The Roundhouse Gang Model Railroad Club will be holding a Swap Meet on October 17th, at the Janet Groeske Senior Center, 5257 Sierra Street (1 block north of Sears). Hours will be from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Admission: $3.00; spouse and children under 18 admitted free. For more information, contact: Gary, (909) 794 3153; e-mail: gwinterg-erst@verizon.net

Colorado, Colorado Springs — The Slim Rail Model Railroad Club will be having their Annual Model Railroad Show and Swap Meet on October 17th, at Rampart High School, 8250 Lexington Drive. Hours will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include large operating layouts, collectibles, clinics, and swap tables. Admission: $4.00, adults; children with adult admitted free; $6.00, family. For more information, contact: John Campbell, 18510 Augusta Dr., Monument, CO 80132; (719) 481-2698; e-mail: johnfn3@msn.com

Connecticut, Fairfield — Station Stop '09, the Housatonic Model Railway Club's 23rd Annual Train Show, will be held on October 25th, at Ludlowe High School, located on Unquowa Road. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Attractions to include operating modular layouts, displays, and dealer sales tables. Admission: $6.00, adults; $2.00, children under 13. For more information, call: Jack Ciarletto, (203) 374-1118; or visit: www.housatonicmr.org

Connecticut, Orange — The New Haven and Derby Model Railroad Club's 17th Annual Model Train Show will be held on October 11th, at the High Plains Community Center, 525 Orange Center Road (Route 152). Hours will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission by Donation: $5.00, adults; $1.00, 12-18 w/adult; under 12 admitted free. Site is handicap accessible. For more information, contact: Don Robillard, 74 Colonial Blvd., West Haven, CT 06516; (203) 932-0185; www.newhaven-derbymodelrailroadclub.org

Connecticut, Stamford — The Stamford Model RR Club O Scalers will be having an Open House on November 7th, at Saint John's Episcopal Church, 628 Main Street. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Attractions to include their layout in operation, and a white elephant table. Bring your favorite models and projects to show. Admission, coffee and donuts are free. For more information, call Jim Mardiguian, (718) 347-3159; e-mail: dlwh2466@hotmail.com; or visit: www.stamfordmodelrrclub.com

Connecticut, Waterbury — Classic Shows, LLC will be holding a Train and Toy Show on October 25th, at the Holiday Inn, 3580 East Main Street. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Admission: $5.00, adults; children 12 and under admitted free with adult. For more information, call (203) 926-1327; or visit www.ClassicShowsLLC.com

Florida, Englewood — Regal Railways will be having a Train Show on October 24th, at 401 N. Indiana Avenue. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Attractions to include vendors and a small layout. Admission: $4.00, adults; children under 13 admitted free. For more information, call Joe Schramm, (727) 244-1341; or visit: www.regalrailways.com

Florida, Homosassa — Regal Railways will be holding a Train Show on October 31st, at the Lions Club, 3705 S. Indiana Terrace. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include a layout, and vendors. Admission: $4.00, adults; children under 13 admitted free. For more information, call: Joe, (727) 244-1341; or visit: www.regalrailways.com

Florida, New Smyrna/Edgewater — Regal Railways will be having a Train Show on November 7th, at 820 W. Park Avenue. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include vendors, and a small train layout. Admission: $4.00, adults; children under 13 admitted free. For more information, call Joe at (727) 244-1341; or visit: www.regalrailways.com

Florida, Palatka — The Palatka Railroad Preservation Society will be presenting their annual Palatka RailFest on October 17-18th, at Price-Martin Community Center, 222 N. 11th Street. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. The RailFest includes their Train Show & Sale, and Browning Railroad Museum exhibits. On site attractions include: Union Station, 100-year old train depot on the National Register of Historic Places; an ACL 0623 Atlantic Coast Line class M-5 caboose; Railrodeo, a 32 x 6 foot Western Pennsylvania layout created by Irwin Saylor in the 1970s; and operating HO-scale and modular N-scale layouts. Admission and parking are free. For more information, call: Howard, at (386) 325-7425; or (386) 972-4515; or visit railsofpalatka.org

Florida, Pinellas Park — H&R Trains will be holding their 57th Train Show on October 2-4, at H&R Trains, 6901 U.S. Hwy. 19 N. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include exhibits of every scale, "how-to" classes, as well as seminars on model railroad topics and demonstrations of new products. Admission is free. For more information, contact: David Beiter or Alice Morris, H&R Trains, 6901 U.S. Hwy. N, Pinellas Park, FL 33781, (727) 526-4682; fax (727) 526-3439; e-mail: hrtrains@hrtrains.com; www.hrtrains.com

Idaho, Idaho Falls — The Eagle Rock Railroad Historical Society will be sponsoring Railshow 2009 on October 10-11th, at the Idaho Falls Recreation Center, 520 Memorial Drive. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Sunday. Admission: $3.00, adults; children 10 and under admitted free. For more information, contact: EERRHS, P.O. Box 2685, Idaho Falls, ID 83403; www.ida.net/org/errhsi/theframes.html; or Dave Shaw, 237 E 15th St., Idaho Falls, ID 83401; (208) 522-3125.

Indiana, Crown Point — The Crown Point Model Railroad Show & Swap Meet will be held on October 25th, at Saint Matthias Church Hall, 101 Burrell Drive. Hours will be from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Show will feature all gauges for sale, and an operating layout. Site is wheelchair accessible. Admission: $3.00, adults; $1.00, children. For more information, call Tom, (219) 663-4480; or Bruno, (219) 663-0666.

Indiana, Danville — The Central Indiana Division NMRA will be having a Train Show on October 17th, at the Hendricks County 4H Fair Grounds, 1900 East Main Street (across from the Post Office). Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Attractions to include operating layouts from Z gauge to G gauge, with a live steam layout, many vendors with railroadiana, books, tapes, and DVDs, two modeling clinics, and a door prize. Refreshments will be available. Site is wheelchair accessible. Admission is free. For more information, contact: John Pancini, (317) 272-3796; e-mail: jpancini@indy.rr.com; or David Clendenin, (317) 272-4690; e-mail: bigfourjct@aol.com

Indiana, Fort Wayne — The NMRA North Central Region Convention will be held October 15th-18th, at the Fort Wayne Marriott, 305 E. Washington Center Road. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Attractions to include model railroad clinics, prototype tours, layout tours, and operating sessions. Admission: $35.00, NMRA members; $45.00, non-NMRA members. For more information, contact: Dick Moessner, 13820 Messenger Bay, Fort Wayne, IN 46845; www.hoosierdiv3nmra.org

Indiana, Fort Wayne — The Maumee Valley Railroad Club will be having a Model Railroad Show & Swap on October 31st, at Coliseum Bingo, 911 W. Washington Center Road. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Attractions to include operating layouts, a hands on trains display (for kids of all ages), and a play area. Refreshments will be available; parking is free, and site is handicap accessible. Admission: $3.00, adults; $5.00, families; children 12 and under admitted free. For more information, contact: Chuck White, 903 W. Main St. #9, Van Wert, OH 45891; (260) 760-1666; e-mail: Railcarman@verizon.net

Indiana, Noblesville — The Hoosier S Gaugers' 6th Annual All S Model Railroad Show will be held on October 10th, at the Hamilton County 4-H Grounds Winks Building, 2003 East Pleasant Street. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include dealer tables, door prizes, operating layouts, and clinics. Admission: $5.00, adults; children 15 and under admitted free with paying adult. For more information, contact: Charles Malinowski, (317) 566-1748; e-mail: bmry1905@yahoo.com; www.hoosier-s.org

Iowa, Spirit Lake — The Prairie Lakes Division of the NMRA will be having their Fall Meet on October 17th, at the Spirit Lake Expo Building. Hours will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to contests, a raffle, vender tables, clinics, the club module layout, business meeting, and layout tours. Admission: $3.00, adults; children 12 and under admitted free. For more information, contact Ronald Peterson, PR Director, (712) 225-4780; e-mail: ron31545@yahoo.com; or Doug Harding, Supt., (712) 754-3303; e-mail: dougharding@iowacentralrr.org

Kansas, Benton — The Mid-Continent Prototype Modelers Meet will be held November 7-8th, at Benton Lions Community Center, 150 S. Main Street. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include clinics, displays, Free-Mo, a raffle, and more. Admission: $5.00 to pre-register; $7.00 at the door with a model, and $10.00 without a model. For more information, contact: Perry Lambert, (316) 616-4672; e-mail: mcpmmeet@hotmail.com; www.midcontinentprototypemodelers.org

Maryland, Timonium — The "Great Scale Model Train Show" plus the "Hi-Rail & Collectors Train Show" will be held October 10-11th, at the Maryland State Fairgrounds, 2200 York Road. Show hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions will include 25,000 sq.ft. of display layouts in all scales; free train movies for kids and adults; clinics and demonstrations; and over 600 tables of model trains, equipment, and related items for sale. Refreshments will be available; parking is free. Admission: $9.00, adults; children under 15 admitted free; $18.00, family. For more information, contact: Howard Zane, 5236 Thunder Hill Road, Columbia, MD 21045; (410) 730-1036; e-mail: hzane1@comcast.net; www.gsmts.com

Massachusetts, Hingham — The South Shore Railway Club will be holding their Fall Open House and Show on October 24-25th, at the Bare Cove Park Building 51, 19 Fort Hill Street. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include a white elephant table, rail movies, a raffle, and club cars for sale. For more information, contact: SSMRC, P.O. Box 170, Hingham, MA 02043-1070; (781) 740-2000; e-mail: ssmrc@verizon.net; www.ssmrc.org

Massachusetts, Wakefield — The North Shore Model Railroad Club will be having a Show on October 17th, at the American Civic Center, 465 Main Street, and an Open House on October 17-18th, at 404 Main Street. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. both days. Admission: $3.00, adults; $1.00, seniors and children; children under 5 admitted free; $7.00, family max. For more information, contact: Joe Greene, (781) 245-4742; e-mail: info@nsmrc.org

Michigan, Jackson — The 10th Michigan Railroad History Conference will be held on November 7th, at the Cascade Manor House, 1970 Kibby Road. Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. The program will be from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Attractions to include a tour of the former Michigan Central Shops (now Miller Trucking Co.) from 6:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m., and an Afterglow at the former Lake Shore & Michigan Southern freight house (now Wendy's) with an informal panel discussion about Michigan railroad history. You may order off the Wendy's menu at your own expense. Registration (includes luncheon): $45.00, by October 1st; $50.00, postmarked later than October 1st. For more information, contact: MRHC, P.O. Box 852, Royal Oak, MI 48068; Greg Degowski, (248) 547-4783; e-mail: gjdegowski@yahoo.com (preferred); www.michiganrailroadhistory.org or Michigan Railroad Calendar on www.michiganrailroads.com

Michigan, Kalamazoo — The Kalamazoo Model Railroad Historical Society will be sponsoring a Kalamazoo Train Show and Sale to be held on October 25th, at the Kalamazoo County Fair Grounds, Hazel Grey Building. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Attractions to include operating layouts in all scales, free clinics, and door prizes. A concession stand will be on site. Admission: $5.00, adults; children 10 and under admitted free. For more information, contact: John Conor, 11321 Fair Lake Drive, Delton, MI 49046; (269) 671-5011; www.kmrhs.org

Mississippi, Meridian — The Southeastern Region Magnolia Division NMRA's organization meeting will be held on November 7th, at Meridian Union Station, 2nd Floor, 1901 Front Street. Hours will be from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Meeting will coincide with the annual Meridian Rail Fest. Rail Fest hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free to both events. For more information, contact: Troy Hight, (601) 389-5370; e-mail: TrHg6@aol.com

New Hampshire Bedford — The Bedford Boomers' 27th Annual Exhibition will be held on November 8th, at McKelvie Middle School, located on Liberty Hill Road. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Attractions to include the Amherst Belt Lines,

New Hampshire Garden Railway Society, Pepperell Siding Club, Bristol S Gaugers, N TRAK, European Railroad Enthusiasts, Live Steamers, and the Bedford Boomers in the display of operating modules in all scales. This event will display a wide range of DCC options, scales, eras, scenery, and clinics. Admission is free; but any donations will be appreciated. For more information, contact: Norm Jones, 38 Spring Valley Road, Methuen, MA 01844; (978) 687-0780; www.boomers-rr.com

New York, Grand Island — The Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society will be holding their Annual Convention on October 8-11, at the Holiday Inn Resort & Conference Center on Grand Island. Hours will vary. Attractions to include a steam powered mixed train trip on the Arcade & Attica railroad on Friday; a Train Show on Saturday; a banquet on Saturday evening, and layout tours scheduled for Friday evening and on Sunday. Additional activities at various sites will be scheduled at cost. Registration fee: $30.00 plus membership fee of $35.00 if not a member, by September 8th; add $5.00 late fee if postmarked after September 8th. For more information, including registration forms, contact: Registrar Dave Allen, (716) 536-2667; e-mail: nickplate@verizon.net; or Chairman William C. Quick, (716) 653-2348; e-mail: wcqnkp661@verizon.net; or visit the Society's web site at: www.NKPHTS.org

New York, Kings Park — Regal Railways will be hosting a Train Show on October 11th, at the Knights of Columbus, 44 Church Street. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include videos playing, vendors, and a small HO layout. Admission: $4.00, adults; $2.00, children 13 to 17. For more information contact: Joe, (727) 244-1341; www.regalrailways.com

New York, Middletown — Greenberg's Train & Toy Show will be held October 31- November 1, at the Orange County Fair Arena, 100 Carpenter Avenue. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Show will feature a huge marketplace of train, toy, and hobby dealers, operating model railroads, and instructional presentations. Admission: $7.00, adults good for both days; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Greenberg Shows, P.O. Box 34, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-4087; e-mail: Staff@Greenbergshows.com; www.greenbergshows.com

New York, Poughkeepsie — The Hudson Valley Railroad Society will be holding its 38th Annual Railroad Exposition on November 8th, at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center, 14 Civic Center Plaza. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include operating layouts, railroadiana, model exhibits, modular layouts, railroad clinics, dealer tables, modeling demonstrations, movies, and a white elephant table. Refreshments will be available on premises. Admission: $5.00, adults; $4.00, senior/student; $2.00, children under 12. For more information, contact: Denny Evaul, (845) 297-0901; www.hydeparkstation.com

New York, Syracuse — The 35th Annual Great New York State Model Train Fair will be held November 7-8, at the State Fairgrounds. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. both days. This is one of the largest shows in the Northeast, with attractions including 158,000 square feet of exhibit space in two of the largest buildings at the NYS Fairgrounds, with 100+ vendors and 30+ operating layouts. Admission: $8.00, adults; $6.00, seniors & children (3-13); $12.00, 2-day pass. Sponsored by CNY Chapter, National Railway Historical Society. For more information, call: (315) 488-8208; or visit: www.modeltrainfair.com

North Carolina, Hendersonville — The French Broad e'N'pire NTrak Club will be sponsoring Autumn Rails 2009 Model Railroad Show and Swap Meet on October 10th, at Whitmire Auditorium, located on Lily Pond Lane. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission: $5.00, adults; Scouts in uniform, and children under 13 admitted free. For more information, contact: Chuck Place, 1396 Spicer Cove Rd., Hendersonville, NC 28792; (828) 685-2726; e-mail: hmp3@blueridge.net; www.fbe-ntrak.com

North Carolina, Pisgah Forest — Narrow Trak 09 will be held on October 9-10, at the Transylvania County Recreation Center, 1078 Ecusta Road. Hours will be from 1:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Friday, and from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Saturday. Attractions will include seminars, operating modules, a popular-vote model contest, and music on Saturday night. For a convention package, send an SSAE to: Narrow Trak 09, 11 Owen St., Ste. 104MW, Brevard, NC 28712-7725; or e-mail: plans@citcom.net

Ohio, Dalton — CJ Trains' Fall Greater Wayne County Train and Toy Show will be held on November 8th, at the Buckeye Event Center, 624 Henry Street. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission: $5.00, adults; children 12 and under admitted free. For more information, contact: Jon Ulbright, 941 Buchholz Dr., Wooster, OH 44691; (330) 262-7488 after 6:00 p.m.; e-mail: cathijon@sssnet.com; www.cjtrains.com

Ohio, Sugarcreek — Old Eli's Train and Toy Show will be held on October 31st, at Valley View Church, 2772 Simons Drive N.W. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission: $3.00, adults; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Galen Eli Hoover, P.O. Box 45, Mount Hope, OH 44660; (330) 763-1184.

Ohio, Troy —The Darke Co. Model Railroad Club will be having a Model Railroad Show - Swap Meet on October 4th, at the Miami County Fairgrounds Youth Bldg., 650 N County Road 25-A. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission: $3.00, adults; under 12 admitted free. Refreshments will be available, and the building is handicap accessible. For more information, call: Joe Worz, (937) 337-0011; or e-mail: josephbw@embarqmail.com

Oregon, Eugene — The 1st Division PNR-NMRA Mini-Meet hosted by the Willamette Cascade Model Railroad Club of the Eugene-Springfield area will be held on October 10th, at the Eugene Water & Electric Board Corporate Headquarters, 500 East 4th Avenue. Hours will be from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Attractions to include clinics beginning at 9:00 a.m. followed by never-before-seen home layouts, a popular vote contest, a draw bar pull event, as well as door prizes. Admission is free, and you do not have to be a member of the NMRA to attend. For more information, call: Lee Temple, (541) 954-4917; e-mail: ttandt@ram-mail.com

Oregon, Medford — The Medford Railroad Park will be open to the public on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, April through October. The Railroad Park is located adjacent to Fire Station No. 4 at the intersection of Table Rock Road and Berrydale Avenue. Hours will be from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The Railroad Park is a unique collaboration between Medford's Parks and Recreation Dept., and five volunteer-based railroad-related clubs. Attractions include a visitors center/museum housed within a restored 1910 caboose, a restored 1942 caboose, a restored 1928 flanger, a handcar ride, a motorcar ride, operating layouts, and the Morse Telegraph Club's antique telegraph system. Admission is free; donations are appreciated. For more information, contact: Dick, (541) 779-3002; e-mail: starkers2@msn.com; or Tony, (541) 944-9176; e-mail: spflimsie@aol.com

Pennsylvania, Leesport — The Reading Company Technical & Historical Society will be holding their 30th Annual Train Meet on October 4th, at the Leesport Farmers Market, located on Route 61. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Attractions to include trains of all sizes, railroadiana, and an outdoor flea market, in addition to the nearby Reading Railroad Museum in Hamburg. Admission: $4.00, adults; children 12 and under admitted free with adult. For more information, contact: Dale Miller, c/o RCT&HS, P.O. Box 15143, Reading, PA 19612-5143; (610) 372-3759.

Pennsylvania, Mill Hall — The Clinton Central Model Railroad Club's Annual Train Meet will be held on November 8th, at the Mill Hall Volunteer Fire Company, located at Water Street and Peale Avenue. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission: $3.00, adults; $4.00, family. Group rates available with prior arrangement. For more information, contact: Jim Hill, Clinton Central Model Railroad Club, 15 Logan Avenue, Lock Haven, PA 17745; (570) 726-6826 M-F 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.; wwwccmr.org

Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh — The Mount Troy Volunteer Fire Co. Train and Toy Show will be held on October 18th, at the Banquet Hall, 33 Lonsdale Street. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions will include operating layouts, trains, and toys for sale, refreshments, and raffles. Admission: $6.00, adults; children 15 and under admitted free with paid adult. For more information, contact: Richard Luksik, (412) 321-2114.

Pennsylvania, Strasburg — The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, 300 Gap Road (PA Route 741), will be offering a Garden Railways Tour on October 11th. Hours will be from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. These will be an exclusive, self-guided tour of unique operating garden railways in six Lancaster County private homes. Admission: $10.00, ages 6 and over. Tickets will be on sale at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, PA Route 741, P.O. Box 125, Strasburg, PA 17579; (717) 687-8628; and the National Toy train Museum, 300 Paradise Lane, P.O. Box 248, Strasburg, PA 17579; (717) 687-8623. For more information, visit: www.rrmuseumpa.org or www.nttmuseum.org

Pennsylvania, Tamaqua — The PVTA Model Railroad Swap Meet & Sale will be held on October 11th, at the Salvation Army Building, located on West Broad Street, 1/2 block from Reading Station. Hours will be from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission: $3.00, adults; under 12 admitted free. For more information, call: (570) 645-9133, or (570) 952-7843; or e-mail: trainnut@ptd.net; or hardcoalman@hotmail.com

Texas, Fort Worth — The Lockheed Martin Recreation Association's 27th Annual Railroad Show will be held October 10-11th, at Lockheed Martin Recreation Association, 3400 Bryant Irvin Road. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include modular layout displays, model circus displays, Thomas The Tank kids layout area, the LMRA Railroad Club's permanent 1200 square ft. HO scale layout, and over 190 dealer tables. Admission: $7.00, adults; children 10 and under admitted free. For more information, contact: Robert Bray, 1820 Spruce Ln., Benbrook, TX 76126; (817) 713-6887 from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. CST; e-mail: brayrLja@sbcglobal.net

Texas, Marshall — The Marshall T&P Depot Museum will be having their Annual Model Train Show on October 31st and November 1st, at the Marshall Civic Center, located on Highway 59. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include dealer displays, all scales and gauges, museum displays, and overstock sale, gift shop collectibles, switching layouts, and a special drawing for AMTRAK family train trip. Admission good for both days: $5.00, adults; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Marshall T&P Depot Museum, 800 N. Washington St. Ste 1, Marshall, TX 75670; (903) 938-9495; e-mail: info@marshalldepot.org; www.marshalldepot.org

Virginia, Fredericksburg — Greenberg's Train & Toy Show will be held October 24-25th, at the Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center, 2371 Carl D. Silver Parkway. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Show will feature a huge marketplace of train, toy, and hobby dealers, operating model railroads, and instructional presentations. Admission: $7.00, adults good for both days; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Greenberg Shows, P.O. Box 34, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-4087; e-mail: Staff@Greenbergshows.com; www.greenbergshows.com

Washington, Vancouver — The Southwest Washington Model Railroaders will be celebrating their 36th Annual Great Train Swap Meet on October 3rd, at Hudson's Bay High School, 1206 E. Reserve Street (located just north of the I-5 Bridge at Exit 1-C on Mill Plain Blvd.). Hours will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Attractions to include an operating HO gauge layout of the Columbia Gorge, and over 125 tables with vendors from all over the Northwest. Admission: $4.00, adults; $2.00, students; children under 6 admitted free with paid adult. For more information, call: Richard Renihan, (360) 892-3410; e-mail: rlrenihan@msn.com; or visit: www.swwamodelrailroaders.com

Wisconsin, Eau Claire — The 8th Annual Indianhead Model Railroad Club Show and Sale will be held October 10-11th, at Regis High School, 2100 Fenwick Avenue. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include: sellers, displays, and operating layouts in O, HO, N, Z, and T scale. Admission: $5.00, adults; 12 and under admitted free with adult. $1.00 off admission with non-perishable food donation to Food Bank. For more information, contact: Andrew Doney, (715) 559-0380; e-mail: awdoney@sbcglobal.net

Wisconsin, Madison — The NMRA Midwest Region, South Central Wisconsin Division's Monthly Meeting will be held on October 4th, at the Fitchburg Community Center, 5510 Lacy Road. Meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. Program to include live clinics, model and photo contests, door prizes, and home layout viewing. Admission is free. For more information, contact SCWD, 3015 Union St. #4, Madison, WI 53714; www.nmra-scwd.org

Wisconsin, Milwaukee — Trainfest will be held on November 14-15, at the Exposition Center at Wisconsin State Fair Park. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Attractions to include over 50 operating layouts in Z to G scale, 70 manufacturers, 60 hobby dealers, 12 historical groups, artists and photography displays, and on-site demonstrations, including locomotive testing. Admission: $12.00, adults (online coupon available); $2.00, children 4-14; 3 and under admitted free. To enhance the Trainfest hobbyist experience, organizers are offering a special Friday Product Showcase November 13th, not open to the public. With the purchase of a $40.00 ticket, attendees will receive exclusive access to the Friday Product Showcase as well as admission to Trainfest Saturday and Sunday. It gives hobbyists a chance to meet and greet with manufacturers and dealers, ask questions, and compare products. Hobbyists may also network and get the latest in industry tips to enhance their layouts. As a bonus, every Friday Product Showcase ticket holder receives a complementary grab bag, randomly filled with free train products, subscriptions, and literature sponsored by select manufacturers and publishers. For more information, call: (262) 820-3566; or visit www.trainfest.com

CANADA

Canada, Ontario, Ottawa, —Railfair 32 will be held October 17-18th, at Algonquin College, Building D, located at Woodroffe and Baseline Roads. Hours will be from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include several train layouts, many vendors and displays of model railroading, and supplies for the hobbyist. Admission: $8.00, adults; $5.00, seniors and teens; $1.00, children 5-12; children under 5 admitted free. Parking is free. All funds raised and those from ticket sales from our donated layout raffle will go to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

MRN: A Year in Review

As a courtesy to our readers, we have compiled an index featuring every product reviewed in the pages of MRN over the past year. We hope you find it useful.

September 2009

Project DCC, Part 12 A Final Look at Project DCC
American Limited Models (HO) Semaphore Kits
Athearn (N & HO) Flxible Visicoach & (HO) EMD SW1000 Diesel Locomotive
Atlas (N) Masterpiece 1932 ARA Boxcar
Atlas O (O) GP7 Diesel Locomotive
Banta (On30) Cab Conversion Kit
Broadway Limited (HO) Paragon 2 Hudson
Trucks 'N Stuff (HO) Peterbilt 389 and Kenworth W900L

August 2009

Project DCC, Part 11: Automated Computer Control using Panel Pro, Layout Commander, and Train Controller
Aristo-Craft (RCC) Train Engineer Revolution
Athearn (N) Husky Stacks, FP45/F45 with Tsunami Sound, & (HO) CF-7 with Flat Roof
Atlas (HO) Alco HH600/660 Diesel Locomotive
Intermountain (N) EMD FP7 & F7B
Tahoe Model Works (HO) Replacement Railroad Trucks
Piko (HO) Glassworks Complex Structure Kits
Signature Press (Book) *Billboard Refrigerator Cars*
Walthers (HO) Proto 2000 Heritage USRA Mallet
Woodland Scenics (HO) Drive 'N Dine Built 'N Ready Structure

July 2009

Project DCC, Part 10B: Manual Computer Control with Layout Commander & Train Controller
American Limited Models (N) Sand Tower
Blair Line (N) A to Z Used Car Lot Kit
ExactRail (N) Hy-Cube, Vert-a-Pac & Covered Hoppers
Lionel (O) UP Heritage Scheme SD70ACe Diesel Locomotive
Marklin (HO) *Rheingold Express* & Central Station Command Station
Micro-Trains (N) SP C-50-9 Caboose
Walthers (HO) GP15-1 Diesel Locomotive & Diesel Tug and Car Float Kits
Vollmer (HO) Jeep Wrangler Rubicon
Woodland Scenics (G) Whistle While He Works Figure Set

June 2009

Project DCC, Part 10A: Manual Computer Control with Panel Pro & STP
Athearn (N) Overland Passenger Cars & (HO) F45/FP45
Atlas O & NCE (O & DCC) 2-Rail O-Scale Primer
Blair Line (N & HO) Section House Kit
Bridgewerks Mini-Mag 3-S DC Power Controller
Hayes Publishing (Book) *Western Pacific Depots and Stations*
Kato (N) Pennsy NW2 Switchers
Pennsylvania Heritage Models (HO) Track Cover System
Piko (G) Qwik Kit Structure Kits
Rivarossi (HO) 60-Foot Passenger Cars
River Point Station (HO) Ford Expedition

May 2009

Project DCC, Part 9B: Using Your PC to Control Your Layout
Athearn (N) PS-1 Double Door Boxcars & (HO) Spine Car Set
Atlas O (O) Amtrk Dash 8 & Horizon Passenger Cars
Bachmann (Fn3) 2-6-6-2 Steam Locomotive
Banta (O) Inspection Cab kit for Bachmann 4-4-0
Broadway Limited (HO) Paragon2 C60AC Diesel Locomotive
Busch (HO) *Ape* Delivery Truck & *Smart ForTwo* Car
ExactRails (HO) Gondola, Hy-Cube, & Vert-A-Pack, Plus Interview
Kato (N) EMD E8/E9 Diesel Locomotive
Southcoast Scale Models (HO) Samuel J. Rizzler Paper Co. Kit

April 2009

Project DCC, Part 9A: Computer Control Introduction
Athearn (HO) Genesis SD60M Diesel Locomotive
CMW (HO) Utility Truck
Charles Smiley (DVD) *Your Colorful Southern Pacific*
Kato (N) *Broadway Limited* Passenger Car Set & Add On
MTH (O) Premier Line Dash 8 Diesel Locomotive
Micro-Trains (Z) ACF Passenger Car Set
Piko (Large) Garden Train Set
Rivarossi (HO) 4-8-8-4 *Big Boy* Steam Locomotive
Sunset Models (HO) Brass SP Mogul Steam Locomotive
Walthers (N) Cornerstone Sanding Tower Kit & (HO) *Hiawatha* Set Conclusion

March 2009

Project DCC, Part 8 Integrating a Grade Crossing
Aristo-Craft (L) 2-Bay Hopper
Atlas (N) Code 65 True-Track & (HO) Covered Hopper
Bachmann (On30) Railbus and Trailer & (Book) *E-Z Model Railroads*
Banta (HO, S & O) Railroad Signs
Bar Mills (HO & O) Gas Stop
Bluford Shops (N) Auto Boxcars
Broadway Limited (HO) 2-10-2 Steam Locomotive
Drail Modelspoor (Windows PC) *AnyRail Layout Design Software*
Norscot (HO) Caterpillar D9T Bulldozer
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Broadway Limited C30-7
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Signature Press (Book) *Southern Pacific Freight Cars, Vol 5*
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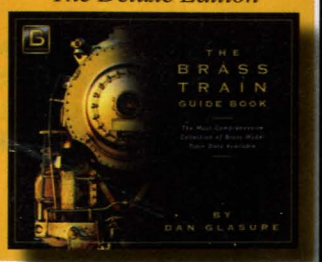

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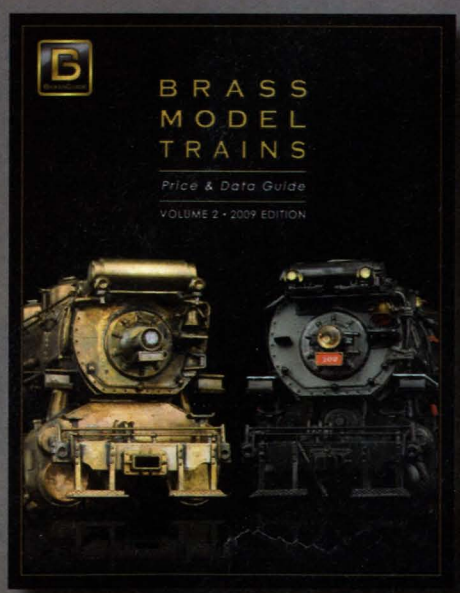

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